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Adventure

Talbot Mundy
Robert Simpson
Everett Saunders
Percy Charles Chandler
Hugh Pendexter
Arthur M. Harris
Warren Elliot Carleton
Ernest Lyons
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1 Complete Novel
2 Complete Novelettes

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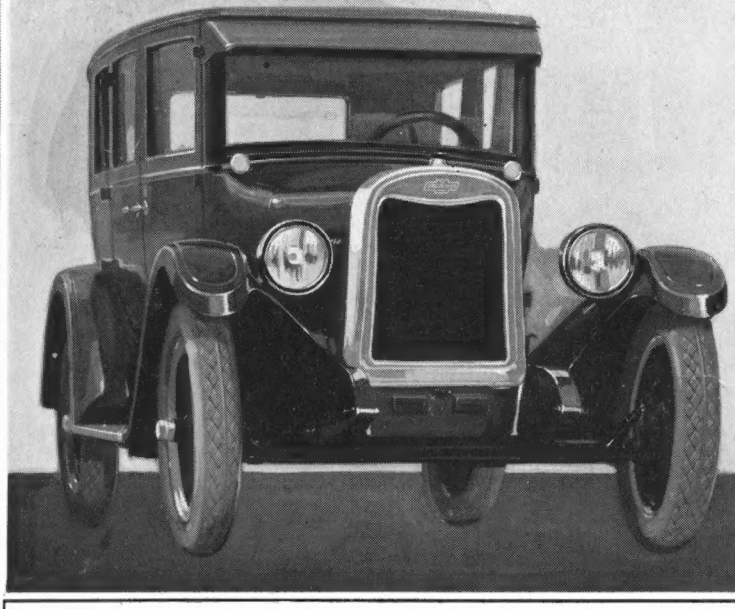

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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THREE COMPLETE NOVELETTES

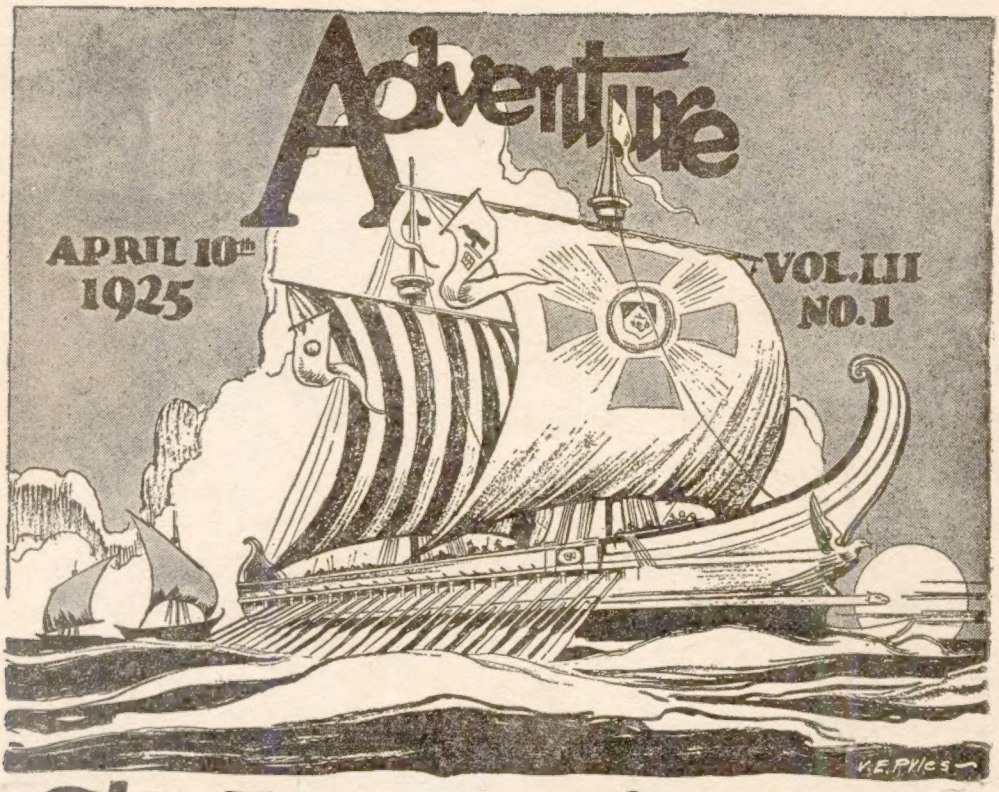
GAS impaired the general's vision and ruined his temper. *Wally* and his ambulance stood close at hand; the general told him to go fetch some medicine. What happened to *Wally* is told in "EYEWASH," a complete novelette by Leonard H. Nason, in the next issue.

THE liner came out of the fog with a rush. Beneath the impact the *Jeanette Tregellis* split in two and went down. One man only, and he himself was a wrecker, fought his way back to the surface and clawed at the side of an empty boat. "ROMANCE," a complete novelette by Charles Beadle, is in the next issue.

PURE, dumb luck made "*Slim*" *Evans* stumble on to fifty thousand dollars; but not before he stumbled down through a bunch of air pockets in his Army plane. "SLIM GRABS SOME GREASE," a complete novelette by Thomson Burtis, will appear in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**



The Enemy of Rome

A Complete Novel by Talbot Mundy

Author of "Tros of Samothrace," "Om," etc.

CHAPTER I

BRITAIN: EARLY AUTUMN: B. C. 56

A ROMAN bireme with no oars in evidence, scandalously untidy with a long slit in her sail and half of her cordage hanging overside, lolled on the incoming tide up Thames-mouth. The shore, far away on either hand, was mud with dense forest behind it. Thousands of sea birds flocked and screamed over the mussel beds, and hundreds followed the ship's wake; but the five and sixty men on board had had no rations for two days, so there was no waste for the gulls to get excited over.

The crew was even short of water.

Tros of Samothrace sat on the only water cask on the high poop, beside his man Conops of the one eye, who held the steering oar. There were half a dozen sullen Britons in the bow, making no pretense to be doing anything, and the remainder sat, chin on knees, in the ship's waist, abaft the low, square citadel, looking as if mutiny and murder would be altogether too mild to express their feelings.

Tros' amber eyes were heavy from lack of sleep. The gold band across his forehead that held his heavy black hair in place, was awry, giving him a drunken look. His purple cloak, creased and sea stained, was torn and one slit looked as if it might have been done by some one's knife. The knuckles of his left hand were bruised and bleeding.

One Briton in the ship's waist kept feeling

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at his teeth, as if to count those that remained.

Forward, on the ship's bow, there were two machines for shooting flights of arrows. There were two more on a kind of citadel amidships and two on the poop. But all except those on the poop had been put out of commission by removing the gut strings. The Britons had no knives nor any other weapon, and looked sullenly aware of it.

Conops, after hauling at the long steering oar half a dozen times to keep the ship from drifting beam-on to the tide, cocked his one blood-shot eye at Tros.

"Master, they have not drunk since yesterday."

"Nor I. Nor you," Tros answered.

"Better give them a drink now, master, else I think they will come at us again. They look ugly. They are close to home."

"Aye, too close!" Tros hitched his long purple scabbard so that the sword hilt lay readier to hand.

"When a man has been paid off he is no more use until he has spent the money. When a thirsty Briton has had drink—back there!" he roared, striding toward the ladder that led down into the ship's waist.

His hand was on his sword hilt and the Britons, glancing at one another, decided the moment was not ripe for an assault. They retreated and sat down again. But an iron bolt thrown from forward of the citadel missed Tros by the thickness of the whiskers on his dark, determined jaw. He squared his shoulders.

"Bring me that man!" he commanded, speaking Gaulish.

The Britons understood that well enough. There was not much difference between it and their own dialect, although theirs contained more Norse and German words because of the constant coming and going of ships across the North Sea, and the raids, and the interchange of prisoners and slaves and women.

For a moment or two there was no response, but Conops let go the steering oar, fitted the iron crank to one of the after arrow machines and, laying twelve long arrows in the grooves, wound the bow taut. Four of the Britons went then and fetched a man who was hiding forward of the citadel, hustling him aft, toward the poop ladder. He climbed up alone and stood glaring at Tros—dark skinned, dark eyed, nearly a head shorter and not so broad as he, but lithe and active looking, with a week's growth of straight black hair on his face and a desperate stare in his eyes.

"What have you to say?" Tros asked him.

"I threw. I missed. If I loved you, I would not have thrown. If I were not parched and hungry, I would not have missed!"

Tros laughed, with his hands on his hips and his head thrown back. His was a volcanic "Ho-ho-hoh!" that shook his shoulders.

"That is a *man's* answer! Hah! I like it! So you love me not? Let us see whether the sea gods or the gods of Britain love you!"

Suddenly he tripped the man, seized him as he fell and, lifting him by arm and leg, hurled him down among the others in the ship's waist, where a dozen of them broke his fall because they could not get out of the way in time. Tros stood, arms akimbo, and laughed again.

"I am a better shot than he was!" he remarked. "How many have I hit with one bolt? Six—seven! And the bolt still good for a day's work! Man the oars now, every mother's son of you, before I——"

He made a gesture with his thumb toward the arrow engine, but his eyes were scanning the northern riverbank. One Briton dived off the bow and began swimming like a beaver toward a drifting log.

"Down off that bow, the rest of you!" roared Tros, and Conops took aim.

They had more sense than to wait for a flight of arrows that could hardly miss one of them. They might have hidden forward of the midship citadel, but panic is uncalculating stuff. They went to the oars instead. Thirty oars on each side went out through the ports and the steady thump and swing began, Tros beating time with his sword hilt on a Roman soldier's bronze shield—Cæsar's own, for aught he knew; it was a work of art, embossed with figures of Alexander of Macedon and his generals, in high relief.

"Now!" he shouted. "Two hours' strong rowing, and I broach the water barrel. You shall drink as you shall row—enough or not enough! My word on it!"

CONOPS no longer had to strain at the steering oar. The galley steered easily with all that way on her. He and Tros watched the swimmer, who was steadily pushing the log in front of him

across the tide toward where three crowded, unsafe looking craft had put out from a creek two miles away.

"Better shoot him, master. Of twelve arrows, one would surely hit!"

"Aye, but what use, Conops? If he drowns, that is the Gods' affair, and his. The men in those boats have already seen us. If they think we are some new kind of northern rover, I like their spunk! If they recognize this for a Roman galley, I admire their spunk still more! It is no child's play, Conops, to put out in skin-covered baskets and offer fight to a warship! And I think these Britons of ours may help us fight them off—plunder being plunder!"

"It looks to me as if there are at least thirty or forty of them in each of those boats," Conops answered. "Look! Three more boats! Spunk? They will come close and throw fire into us!"

"Not they!" said Tros. "What plunder is there from a burned ship? They will follow until the tide turns, or our rowers tire, or until we stick our beak into a mud bank. Then they will try to fight their way aboard, as wolves attack a cornered stag. And it would be no use ramming them," he mused. "That basket work they build with wouldn't crush; they would simply climb over our beak."

"That swimmer will tell them we are only two, and our crew against us! Turn, master! Put to sea again!" Conops urged, making ready to throw his weight against the steering oar.

"Without water enough for a day!"

"But look! There come three more of them!"

"Four more, making eight. There will be others as we go upriver. We have but a netted fish's chance, Conops, unless we get a slant of wind, for they are all pirates along this riverbank. Unless we reach Lunden ahead of them, and find Caswallon* there, or some friend of his who knows us, this will be our last journey in this world, little man! Keep her more in mid-stream; we need the full force of the tide."

Tros went and stood by the poop ladder, watching the rowers. One of them—and he had been a captain of his own ship until Tros stole Cæsar's galley with the aid of him and sixty other Britons—drew his oar back through the port and offered argument:

"What is the use? Our friends come. Wait."

"Out with that oar and row!" Tros thundered at him, beating on the shield again, for the whole crew had slowed down. "Water, if you row hard! If you don't, you shall sizzle like eggs on a skillet, for I'll burn the ship before one Briton comes aboard without my leave!"

Eight days of thrashing to and fro in storms, from Kent to the coast of Belgium and half way to Germany before they made Thames-mouth at last, had taught them that he did everything he said he would, including the breaking of heads.

They rowed steadily for half an hour, but the galley was heavy; two feet of solid water flopped in her bilge. The pursuing Britons gained, as the rowers could see from time to time, when their heads swung by the oar ports and the galley turned at a bend in the river. He who had been a captain, and was still one in his own opinion, gave tongue again, but this time did not slacken at the oar:

"You are a fool, Tros! You make us work for nothing. They gain on us all the time, and now the river narrows. We have no anchor. When the tide turns we shall drift into the mud, and there they will have their will of us, unless we come to terms. For how can we fight? You made us all throw our new knives overboard."

"Aye, a fool, and none can argue with a fool!" said Tros. "I am like the tide, that has not yet turned! Row, you sons of fish wives! Row! Row harder!"

He resumed his beating on the shield, and then, because the crew was obviously weakening, he broached the water-barrel and, taking the helm himself, sent Conops down to give them drink one by one—Conops with a two-edged knife in one hand and a copper bowl in the other, ready to jump and fight his way back to the poop. The Britons were less afraid of him than of his lion-eyed master.

The drink did the rowers good. But even so the pursuers gained. A rather futile and ill-shapen arrow plunked into the planking of the poop deck and stuck there quivering within a yard of Tros' foot. He called Conops back to the helm, swung the arrow engine around on its swivel and fired it.

All twelve arrows swept into the crowded boat that had ventured closest. There was an answering yell of defiance, but six or

*By the Romans Cassivelaunus.

seven men dropped out of view below the gunwale and, at once, all the pursuers fell back out of range, presently dividing themselves into two columns that began again to overtake the galley, four long, crowded boats on either hand, with withes erected all around them now, cross-plaited into a sort of screen to protect the crews. They had set up the withe screens incredibly swiftly.

They were unsafe, unseaworthy looking craft, too narrow for the length and having to be bailed incessantly. The men who manned the paddles were inconvenienced by the screen erection around the sides, but nevertheless comparatively safe at anything but very close range, because an arrow would have to be marvelously aimed to strike straight between the withes except by sheer luck. In the bow and the stern of each boat there were skin-clad men who brandished shields and yelled to the paddlers, exposing themselves recklessly and dancing to attract attention.

"They have fought a many Northmen," Tros remarked to Conops. "They know how to draw a longship's fire and to protect the paddlers."

"Master, let them have the ship," Conops answered nervously. "While they loot this galley you and I can swim ashore, and then find our way along the bank to Lunden. Our own Britons will cease rowing presently and then——"

"Little man, all Cæsar's gold lies under the hatch in the cabin below us!"

"What is gold to a dead man, master?"

"Or death to a live one! Nay, I think we are not far from Lunden."

"But I see more boats!" urged Conops. "Look—by the bend in the river ahead of us!"

ARROWS began humming into the galley and one rower fell off his bench, shot through the eye. The other rowers stopped work and began shouting to the Britons in the boats, who answered with yells and drew closer. Conops let go the helm and jumped for the arrow engine, twisting at the crank and shouting to Tros to lay arrows in the grooves.

But Tros took a torch from a box beside the water barrel, lighted it at an earthen firepot and brandished it around his head to make it blaze.

"Now!" he roared down at the rowers. "Tell those pirates I'll burn the ship unless they haul off!"

He jumped into the ship's waist and stood with his back to the cabin door, just as Conops sent a flight of arrows twanging from the engine. If the ship were burned and beached there would still be one chance in a thousand of recovering the gold, and at any rate he was determined not to let longshore pirates have it. The best place to fire the ship would be in the cabin under the poop, where there was plenty of stuff that was inflammable.

There began to be a lot of shouting back and forth as the galley swung beam to the tide. Some of the rowers jumped overboard and swam for the already overcrowded boats; some stood on the benches and waved their arms to show they had no weapons and would not fight even if they had. Another flight of arrows twanged and whistled from Conops' engine, but the galley's crew yelled to the attacking parties not to answer it.

"There are two men—only two men!" they kept shouting. "Keep away, or they will burn the ship!"

Five or six more plunged overboard, and Tros decided to let them all go; he would be better off without them, better able to make terms. He swung himself up on to the poop, still brandishing the torch, and a spear thrown from alongside slit his cloak. He caught the spear and raised it as whalers hold a harpoon, leaning overside to hurl it through the bottom of the nearest boat, and paused, rigid, in that attitude.

"They run!" remarked Conops from over by the arrow engine. In some way he had jammed the mechanism and was jerking at it nervously. "Likewise, we drift into the mud!"

He jumped for the helm and began straining his whole strength against it, with one foot on the bulwark rail, but Tros saw it was too late to keep the galley off the mud bank.

"Let her take it as she drifts," he ordered. "If she buries her beak she will lie here forever!"

The galley's oars sprawled this and that way like the legs of a drunken water beetle as she swung round on the tide and settled herself comfortably on the mud.

The hide-and-wattle boats were scurrying away as fast as the paddles could drive them, but fourteen other boats, all wooden,

rowed with oars and crowded with armed men, were coming on, downriver, against the tide, and in the stern of one of them, that had a gilded figurehead carved like a swan, there sat a woman, whose fair hair streamed over her shoulders.

"Fflur!"

Tros waved the torch and flung it overboard. There were still about thirty Britons in a cluster in the galley's waist, and Tros was never without an eye to business. He had promised that every member of the crew who should stand by faithfully until the journey's end should have a fair share of the loot, he himself to be arbiter. Not one of them had been what he considered faithful, and they were not at Lunden yet.

"Whoever fears Fflur and mistrusts me, swim for it!" he shouted.

Nine or ten men heeded that suggestion, some taking the oars with them.

It was a long swim; there was mud and marsh, where an oar would make progress easier. Tros counted the remaining men, and made the count nineteen, including all three captains of the three crews he had started with.

"Little man, we have the lion's share!" he remarked to Conops.

"Maybe. I would sell mine for one drachma in hand!" said Conops.

THEN Fflur came, jumping up the galley's side as actively as if she had been born to sailoring, not taking Tros' outstretched hand, until her leather-stockinged feet were on the poop deck. Then she kissed him on both cheeks, laughing and friendly.

In less than a minute after that the galley was a-swarm with Britons of the white-skinned, fair-haired type, some in peaked iron caps and all dressed handsomely, with their legs in dyed woolen trousers and their long shirts embroidered in three colors. They examined and laughed at everything, ignoring the crew as if they were some sort of inferior animals.

"Keep them out of the cabin below this poop," said Tros, and Fflur nodded.

She had been a chief's wife long enough to take hints swiftly; she gave an order in low tones, and four men did her bidding, standing by the cabin door in the attitude of bored alertness that the British climate breeds in gentlemen. They said nothing, did nothing, drew no weapon; but none offered to encroach on their preserve.

Fflur's blue-gray eyes appeared to take in everything, including the slits in Tros' cloak and the tired stare of his amber eyes.

Her own dress was immaculate, the laced leather bodice outlining a strong figure that was not yet matronly, although she had borne four children, one of whom was near manhood. She was very good to look at, proud and kind and thoughtful, with wrought gold jewelry that made her seem to have stepped out of the dawn of time.

"Caswallon will be in Lunden tonight," she said quietly. "Cæsar has left Britain with all his troops, after two battles and some skirmishing. He ordered us to send him hostages to Gaul, but Caswallon has been trying to prevent the men of Kent from doing that. Is this ship stuck fast? The beacon warned us of a Northman in the Thames, and when Caswallon is away that is my business."

Tros answered that the tide would probably lift them off the mud before long, but that he had no anchor. Then he whispered about what lay under the cabin floor.

"It is yours," she said promptly, but Tros laughed.

He had a way of smiling, when the laugh was finished, that was irresistible, holding his great head a little to one side and half closing his eyes.

"Life and money are his who can keep them!" he answered.

She nodded again.

"Yes. And Britain is his who can keep it. Caswallon is a king still, and you helped us, Tros. I will help you."

She went down the poop ladder before Tros could offer her a hand, and into the cabin, he after her. There was hardly more than head room underneath the beams, and the place was crowded with Cæsar's personal belongings—his bed, tent, chests of clothes, toilet articles and a chest full of memoranda written by his secretary, not yet annotated.

Tros stirred among the tablets and parchments, with his cloak in Fflur's way. Then together they moved that chest from off the hatch and discovered gold in bags beneath it, bags that even Tros found heavy.

There were ten, and Fflur's eyes glistened

in the dim light through the partly opened door; but not so keenly as Tros' eyes had blazed at the sight of Cæsar's seal in the box with the memoranda. While she looked at the gold he took the seal and hid it in a pocket in his cloak. Fflur called to her iron-capped gentlemen:

"Put these ten bags into my boat. Guard them!"

They obeyed without comment, summoning inferiors to do the portering, two men to a bag, themselves surveying the proceedings leisurely, arranging among themselves which three should guard the gold when it was safely overside, and which one should wait for Fflur.

He looked like the most casual cockerel who ever lived—a youngish man with a very long, tawny mustache, which he twisted whenever anybody looked at him. He wore a cloak of yellow dyed linen trimmed with beaver fur, and a golden-hilted sword in a scabbard inlaid with gold. There had been a big dent in his iron cap, but it had been hammered out again until only a vague shadow of it showed.

"Anything else?" he asked in a bored voice, that was hardly insolent and yet contained no hint of deference.

Tros gestured toward the chest of memoranda. The Briton ignored him, absolutely, seemed unaware of his existence.

"Take that too," Fflur ordered, pointing at the chest, and the Briton strolled to the door to summon a sailor, who carried the chest overside.

Fflur examined Cæsar's bed and all the other odds and ends that filled the cabin.

"Is Cæsar a woman?" she asked scornfully, opening a small chest of cosmetics that reeked of eastern scents.

"I have heard strange tales of him," Tros answered, "but it may be all that stuff is for the women he meets in his wanderings."

"And this?" she asked, holding up a bowl, in which lay a strange, four-bladed knife.

"He has the falling-sickness,* and at such times they bleed him with that," Tros answered. "He has them use a silver bowl because, he says, his blood is Cæsar's, which is blood of the gods, since he claims descent from Venus Genetrix. The blood is laid before her altar afterwards, and then burned with great ceremony."

*Epilepsy.

THE Briton in the iron cap returned and was at pains to appear disinterested, stroking his mustache and leaning with his back against the door post. Fflur introduced him at last:

"This is Orwic, son of my husband's cousin. Orwic, this is Tros, my husband's friend, a son of a Prince of Samothrace."

Orwic bowed almost imperceptibly; it was only his eyes that betrayed any real emotion.

"Oh, are you Tros? I saw you smash Cæsar's fleet off the beach eight days ago. I am glad to meet you."

His manner altered, but the change was almost imperceptible.

"Were you in that fight on the beach?" Tros asked him.

"Oh, yes."

Fflur added details:

"His chariot was the first into the water. He was the first to slay a Roman hand to hand. It was he who slew the Roman standard bearer of the Tenth, and he who led the boarding of a Roman galley. He was the last in retreat when the Romans won their landing on the beach. Caswallon sent him with me, in my chariot, to Lunden as a mark of honor."

"I liked the ride with you, of course," said Orwic, looking miserably self-conscious. "Fflur, do we wait here forever, or——"

"Choose twenty of the safest men and put them in charge of this ship, responsible to me," Fflur answered. "I will take Tros and his man to Lunden in my boat. Order all the captains of the other boats to fasten ropes to this ship and tow it to Lunden as soon as the tide lifts it off the mud. Tell them to be sure that the men who came with Tros have food and drink, and say that if a thing is stolen or a man harmed, Caswallon will do the punishing!"

"And I?" asked Orwic.

"Come with me in my boat."

Orwic heaved a deep sigh of relief and strolled out on the deck to issue orders, pulling his mustache and looking languid, as if the mere suggestion of having anything to do bored him to the verge of death.

"A man?" Tros asked, raising his heavy eyebrows.

Fflur met his gaze and nodded, nodded twice.

CHAPTER II

LUNDEN TOWN

LUNDEN lay amid the marshes in a forest so dense that the nearness of a town was unsuspected until one came on it around a river bend.

And then there was a gray mist on the river and the wooden buildings were wreathed in that and in smoke that rose straight up and hung like a veil between earth and sky. The sunset glowed through the haze as if all earth to westward were on fire, silhouetting the masts and spars of nearly a dozen ships, at which Tros wondered.

He had dozed away a time or two on the long row up the Thames—Conops snored shamelessly, with his head on one of Cæsar's bags of gold—and now, between sleeping and waking, he was not sure at first whether he was awake or dreaming.

"How come such ships to be here?" he demanded, speaking first in Greek, because that was his native tongue, and not remembering to talk Gaulish until Fflur laughed.

Eight storm-thrashed days and nights he and Conops had stood watch and watch over a mutinously superstitious crew, who would have sacrificed them to the sea gods if they could have managed it.

Now to Tros, with his weary frame relaxed and the rhythmic oar thump in his ears, his head on a seat beside Fflur's knees and good, cool mead under his sword belt, it almost seemed as if he had died and were in another world. There was nothing in focus, nothing as he had supposed it should be. However, Fflur's quiet voice enlightened him:

"Those are all merchant ships from Gaul, and from the lowlands where the Belgæ live, and from the cold lands to the northward."

He began to remember, as in a dream, how the 'longshore Britons had hunted him up Thames-mouth.

"How get they here?"

"None harms a merchant ship," she answered. "It is only when the longships come in quest of slaves and tribute that there is any fighting, except when the merchant crews get drunk in Lunden and a little blood flows."

"I have been told, and I told Cæsar, that there is no such place as Lunden," Tros said sleepily. "I was told it is a myth place, like the land-locked sea to northward of which a man named Pytheas told two centuries ago on his return from many wanderings."

"Three of yonder ships are from that land-locked sea," Fflur answered.

Tros felt all the blood go tingling through his veins anew, for he would rather journey into unknown lands than be the emperor of all the known ones. Fflur felt, or saw the change in him and ceased smoothing his hair—he had hardly felt it.

"If thegRomans knew of this river and this town," he said, musing.

"Too many know!" Fflur answered. "Never a year but we must fight a dozen times to keep the Northmen from laying Lunden waste. And that is strange, because we like the Northmen, and they like us. Some we have made prisoners and have given wives to, and they have settled down among us, some even becoming lesser chiefs, and helping to fight their own folk when the longships come.

"In the spring of the year they come, and in the autumn now and then, when their own harvests have been scant and they dread the long dark winter without corn enough to keep their bellies easy, and no seed in the spring.

"And in the spring, if they have eaten all the seed that winter, they come in twos and threes and dozens, fighting one another for the right to enter Thames-mouth first. Then there is red war that lasts sometimes for weeks, and we have been hard put to it at times to drive them forth, but sometimes we burn their ships behind them.

"Once, when Caswallon had been chief not more than a few months, they sacked Lunden and burned it. But he rallied his men, and burned one ship, and sank another and made Thordsen the Northman prisoner—him and all his men.

"So Thordsen rebuilt Lunden for us, using wood and teaching us the trick of chimneys and adze-hewn timber. Caswallon gave Thordsen his own sister to wife, and she lives where the nights and days are half a year long, or so I have been told, but the Northmen are great liars.

"None of us has seen the girl since then, although we hear of her at times. It was after that Caswallon married me. My folk are the Iceni, who breed the best horses in Britain and have fought the Northmen since the world began."

Orwic, who steered the boat, and the three other young bloods, who guarded the bags of gold without appearing to admit, even to themselves, that they were doing anything unusual, betrayed interest in nothing except the wild fowl that swarmed among the reeds on either bank, commenting on those and naming them, as grebe, duck, mallard, geese, snipe and half a dozen other sorts appeared and vanished.

To listen to their conversation, nothing was wrong with Britain but the vermin that destroyed the game. Twelve rowers labored at the oars, and nodded when game was discussed, but they seemed to disapprove of Fflur's remarks about the Northmen.

THEY skirted the swamps around Lunden and brought the boat alongside a tiny pier that jutted out into the river where a shallow brook * flowed out between the bulrushes. To their right a low hill rose jeweled in the setting sun, enormous oaks and the roofs of painted wooden houses glowing in a mystery of mist and smoke.

There was a wall of mud and wattle, reenforced at intervals with oaken beams, that curved around the hill and out of sight; and there were thatch-roofed houses close to the wall, with their backs toward it.

Chariot tracks, some rutted deep into the clay, crisscrossed in every direction toward other houses half-invisible among the trees, but there seemed to be only one regular street, that ran between two rows of solemn and tremendous oaks toward the summit of the hill, where the red roof of a mansion bulked above ancient yews against the skyline.†

There were not many people in evidence, although a number of swarthy-skinned, dark-eyed serfs, men and women, were filling water bags and buckets at the brook and carrying them uphill with an air of having done the same thing since the world began.

But wood-smoke came from a thousand chimneys and from holes in thatch roofs, suggesting suppertime and plenty. The air was full of the cawing of rooks that wheeled over the trees in thousands, and the lowing of home-coming cattle, with the occasional bay of a hound or the neigh of a horse who heard the corn bin being opened.

"Lunden is a good town," said Fflur, springing out of the boat and waiting for the chariot that came galloping downhill toward them. "The druids say Lunden was a town a thousand years ago, and will be a town forever until Britain disappears under the sea, because the gods know no dearer place and will preserve it."

"The gods will have to show you how to build a better wall!" said Tros, eyeing the defenses sleepily.

He had seen walls twenty times a man's height, of solid stone and thicker than a house, go down before the Roman battering rams. But Orwic betrayed interest at last:

"That wall keeps the serfs at home, and the knee-high children within call," he said. "We have the forest and the swamps to fight behind. Time and again we have caught the Northmen in the swamps by felling trees around them. As long as we can hunt the wolf and stag and fox, and know the forest better than the beasts do, it seems to me likely that our wall will serve its purpose well enough. Besides, as Fflur just said, the gods love Lunden."

Tros laughed.

"I have heard them say the gods love Rome," he answered, "and I know Cæsar!"

"Cæsar is beaten," Orwic answered.

He spoke with an air of calm, assured finality. One might as well have argued with the sunset—better, because the sunset could not have looked bored.

The bags of gold were heaped on the chariot floor. Fflur drove the impatient stallions with Tros beside her, and Conops asleep again beside the charioteer.

But Orwic and the other Britains waited for their horses to be brought, their youth and strength apparently too precious to be squandered on a mile's walk, or perhaps it was contrary to their religion. At any rate, walking was something a man did not argue about, but did not do.

The chariot galloped past a hundred houses that looked as if their roots were in the very soul of Britain, each in its own oak-fenced garden, with flower beds, bee hives, stables, cow sheds, and a great front-door of oak six inches thick.

The window openings were screened with linen, loosely woven, grayed and yellowed by the wood smoke. The soft, mouse color of the woodwork was relieved by beautifully weathered paint on doors and shutters,

* In later years known as the Fleet; nowadays a sewer under Fleet Street, not far from Ludgate Hill.

† Where St. Paul's Cathedral now stands.

blue, yellow, red, the earth colors that blend with autumn leaves and dew and lush-green grass.

The great house on the hill top was surrounded by an oak fence half a foot thick, but not so high that a tall man could not see over it.

Within the compound there were giant yews clipped into fantastic patterns and almost a village of stables, cow sheds, quarters for serfs and barns for the storage of corn and what-not else.

The great door, with the deep, roofed porch in front of it, resembled nothing Tros had ever seen, although in some vague, indefinable way it recalled to memory the prow of a longship manned by reddish-haired, bearded strangers, that he had once seen ostensibly whaling off the western coast of Spain.

"This is the house that Thordsen built," said Fflur, as serfs ran forward to seize the stallions' heads and she tossed the reins to them. "There is none other like it in Britain, although Thordsen told us that in his land all the kings are housed thus. The Northmen are great liars when they speak of their own land; good friends; bitter enemies. We never believe them unless they swear on their great swords, and even so they lie, if they are made to swear too often. But somewhere Thordsen must have learned to build like this."

WOMEN of all ages, from dried-apple-cheeked old hags to young girls with rosy cheeks and skin like white rose-petals in the dew, came out on to the porch to greet Fflur and to stare at Tros.

Fflur sent them running to prepare a bed for the distinguished guest, and he had stared for a while at the great oak-paneled hall, with its gallery at one end and a fireplace big enough to roast an ox whole, with a chair like a throne under the gallery, and spears and shields hung on the walls, and rich, embroidered hangings.

Then they all came back and kissed him one by one, until Fflur took him by the hand and led him to a small room off the great one, with no door between, but a leather curtain dyed and figured, and showed him a huge wooden bed all heaped with furs and woolen blankets.

"Here you are safe among friends, Tros, and you may sleep to your heart's content," Fflur told him.

Then she watched while the women pulled his outer garments off, taking the stained, slit cloak away, and brought him meat and mead, watched them lay a mattrass on the floor for Conops, ordered the women away and watched, standing by the curtain, while a great, gray, shaggy hound went to the bedside, sniffed Tros cautiously and then lay down beside him.

Then she nodded, as if the hound's behavior had confirmed her own opinion.

"Sleep until Caswallon comes," she said. "He drives fast. He will be here at midnight."

Food, strong mead and the knowledge that he lay with friends, combined with sheer exhaustion to make Tros almost instantly lose consciousness. But he was first and last a seaman, with a seaman's habit of responsibility. An eight-day battle with the wind and waves had fixed in that portion of the consciousness that never sleeps an impulse to arouse the senses suddenly, all nervous and alert.

He could sleep deep, awaken, and be conscious of his whole surroundings in an instant; then fall off to sleep again when he discovered all was well, his senses swaying as of a ship still labored under him.

The first thought that aroused him was the gold, and he remembered Fflur's eyes when she first beheld it in the hole beneath the floor of Cæsar's cabin. But he dismissed that, knowing he was helpless if Fflur should see fit to deprive him of it. The gold seemed relatively unimportant with a mattrass underneath him stuffed with goose-breast feathers.

Then he awakened suddenly to think of the galley being towed up-Thames by row boats, to wonder how they would manage when the tide turned, whether they would not moor her out of sight among the marshes and then plunder her, sink her, perhaps, or burn her to destroy the proofs of pilfering.

He desired that galley above all things except one, and even more than all that gold. She was much too heavy and unwieldy, and steered like a house in a gale of wind, but she was strong, with any amount of bronze in her, and there were changes he knew he could make that would render her almost un-Roman, by which he meant almost seaworthy.

However, he remembered that the galley, like the gold, was in the hands of people who presumably were friends.

The next he knew it was very dark and only a faint suggestion of crimson firelight gleamed between the curtain and the wall, making the darkness move a little as the low flames danced on the hearth. There was a coming and going of cloth-shod feet, with occasional clatter of dishes, as if women were spreading tables in the great halls.

There was considerable noise in what he supposed must be the kitchen, several rooms away. But the arresting sounds, that held attention, were the voices of two men beside the curtain.

He had a mental vision of them seated on a low bench with their backs against the wall, and after a minute or two he recognized one voice as Orwic's. Orwic sounded rather bored, as usual, and spoke, when he did speak, as if he were yawning between every other sentence. It was the other man who carried the brunt of the conversation.

"No, Orwic—" Tros heard the words distinctly— "I was not in the fighting on the beach, because a man can not be in two places. I was at Hythe when Caswallon came to turn out every able-bodied man. He made a fine speech, but all they promised was to hold Hythe, and very few went back with him to fight the Romans.

"I would have gone with him, but I thought of a better idea. You remember what a storm there was three or four days later?

"Well, there was a man named Tros in Hythe, a Syrian or a Greek or a Phœnician, I am sure I don't know which, a big fellow, but a fool, with lots of pluck, who helped me drive three of Caswallon's crews aboard two ships.

"He took one ship, I the other, and we stormed along the coast ahead of the gale until we came on Cæsar's fleet at anchor and crashed into them, breaking the cables.

"Tros was afraid at first, but I led the way and that encouraged him. And he was a pirate born, take my word for it, that fellow Tros was a pirate if ever there was one—hah!"

HE HAD a heavy, sonorous voice that carried distinctly, although he seemed to be trying not to speak loud. Tros, as wide awake now as he had ever been in his life, proposed that Conops should hear too, and reached out with his foot, but Conops was already awake and crouching by the curtain.

"Master," he whispered, creeping to the bedside, "there is a fellow out there claiming to have done what *you* did!"

Tros laid a hand on his mouth and pressed him to the floor.

"Pirate, you say?" said the voice of Orwic.

"Aye, a pirate! I wish you had been there to see him. He was no sooner alongside a Roman ship than he boarded it and put out to sea! He did not wait to finish the work we had begun—not he!

"He had what must have seemed to him a good ship after that leaky old trap he had smashed on the Roman's bows, and no doubt he knew there was loot in the hold. Anyhow, he put to sea and left me to do the rest of it alone."

"You mean you were all alone?"

"Not quite, but the crew wasn't much good. They were afraid. I did all the work at the helm. You see, it was simply a matter of seamanship and steering straight befor the wind.

"Seamanship is in my bones! I was brought up on the South Coast, near Pevensey. I have crossed to Gaul a hundred times, in every kind of weather; and you know my father was a Northman. I sailed downwind and smashed those galleys, wondering why Caswallon had never thought of it. However, *I* did think; and I live to remind him of it! Caswallon owes me a turn now!"

"What became of Tros?" asked Orwic.

"Ask the sea gods! But I wager he was drowned. Even I was almost drowned, and I know those Channel waters. The gale shifted and I was driven back toward Vectis,* where my rotten ship went to pieces under me.

"I crawled out on the beach near by the place where they trade the tin to the Phœnicians. But it was a long time before I could find a boat to bring me back to Pevensey, and then I had a hard time getting horses. However, here I am."

"Yes," said Orwic. "And you look well preserved for a man who has done all that storming, and galley smashing and swimming and what-not else. You look to me, Skell, more like a man who has sunned himself on benches of an afternoon."

"Aye, I have a strong frame and a great endurance," said the gruff voice.

"Orwic!" It was the voice of Fflur now,

* Probably the Isle of Wight.

just a shade excited. "Summon our guest! Caswallon comes!"

CHAPTER III

A HOME-COMING

CASWALLON came by torchlight, standing in a four-horse chariot, with fifty chariots behind him and a hundred mounted men in single file on either side of the procession.

Lunden, man, woman and child, turned out to greet him, though it was midnight, and the windows glowed red behind shadowy trees that seemd afire in torch smoke. They had Julius Cæar sin effigy hanging from an arch of boughs under which Caswallon must pass.

The mist, that deadened voices, spread the light in moving whirlpools that made men seem like specters and Caswallon himself a great god in a golden chariot drawn by monsters.

"The Lunden fog! The Lunden fog!" Fflur exclaimed. "I can't see his face!"

The crowd, on the whole, was silent. Now and then a horn blew. Here and there a woman cried half hysterically, as they lighted the bonfires and the smoky glare increased. Three times a cheer went in waves up-street and volleyed down again, the long, deep-throated, sobbing "Aa-a-a-a-a-h" of men who are too pleased with another man to care to say exactly what they think, a good, back-straightening, gutful sound.

There was a bigger crowd than Lunden had any right to. Men had come from all the countryside, and even from the grassland beyond the forest to the north, where the Iceni raised horses. The Iceni had come south in scores, in the hope of selling remounts to the men who fought the Romans on the Kentish shore, and a group of them, by right of blood relationship, was standing not far from Fflur, all big men, fair complexioned, wearing sleeveless, embroidered tunics over their long, sleeved shirts and woolen trousers—friends, in a sense, but not henchmen, and sarcastic when they spoke at all.

Tros, clad in a new cloak that Fflur's women had brought him, stood beside a lean Phœnician, a black-bearded man with a long, hooked nose, wrapped and wrapped again in shawls of camel-hair against the chill of the mist, his black eyes red rimmed, his whole body shaking as he coughed.

He owned the lateen-rigged ship that lay with her nose among the rushes half a mile away, and was a prince by British reckoning—no mean man by his own.

Around Fflur there were druids, trousered philosophers in long robes whom Orwic treated with courteous contempt, ordering stools brought for them "lest they should tire out all their righteousness before the time for blessings came."

And behind the druids were the women, nearly fifty of them, fluttering with excitement, some fussing because Fflur had refused to wear hood or cloak.

Fflur's three young children stood beside her, sleepy and wrapped in woolen shawls, but her sixteen-year-old son was with his father in the second chariot behind him, driving his own team and laughing as if it were he alone who had sent Cæsar sneaking back to Gaul.

Fflur's jewelry and her fair hair, beaded with the mist, shone in the flickering torchlight; but when she turned her head a moment it seemed to Tros that her eyes outshone them all and that her face was lighted from within.

"If I should ever find her equal, I would marry!" he said quietly to Conops.

But Conops demurred to that:

"Master, you would be the slave of *such* a wife. Freedom is good—the world is full of easy women."

"Aye, and of harbor gallants like yourself!" Tros answered testily.

Then he saw Orwic, plucked him by the cloak and asked who Skell might be; and Orwic, now apparently not bored at all, grew tersely communicative.

The cheering increased in volume as the procession came slowly uphill* to where Fflur waited in the open gateway. There was much more torchlight there, for all the notables of Lunden were on the green common in front of the gate to see Caswallon greet his wife, without missing the burning of the effigy of Cæsar afterwards, and all the dancing around bonfires that was sure to take place.

They had their serfs with them—two or three serfs to each man and woman—and some of Fflur's own domestics were having hard work to keep the space clear. Serf to serf was simple enough, but Lunden's

* Nowadays Ludgate Hill.

free citizenry took it ill when they were smitten on the shins with holly cudgels.

There was quite a little shouting about freemen's rights, and a couple of dark-skinned serving men were roughly handled, until Orwic took five other stalwarts like himself and swaggered blandly around the circle a time or two. There was no argument with Orwic. He was roundly cheered and most abominably bored by the ovation.

Then, into the torch smoke and the glare, Caswallon came, holding back the four dun stallions to a plunging walk, until he wheeled them in front of where Fflur stood, threw the reins to the man beside him, and reached over and lifted her into his arms. No fool for ceremony was he, simply a shock-headed gentleman who loved his wife and did not even greet the Druids until he had hugged her and kissed his children.

Then the druids crowned him with oak leaves as he stepped down from the chariot. Horns blew a blare that split the ear drums —for every Briton had a hunting horn— and the crowd called him king—

"King Caswallon! King!"

He turned and faced them in the gateway, laughing, holding Fflur's hand, with the children clinging to his knees, signing to the other chariots to open up to right and left. And then, because the crowd still could not see him, he shook off the children and the great hound that sprang at his shoulders whimpering affection, and, leaping on the gate-post, stood there, upright as a graven image, with his right hand raised until they all grew still.

"Not bad!" Tros muttered. "Nay, not bad! That man is fit to rule."

"Men of Lunden," Caswallon said, "and men of the Iceni—for I see a number of you—ye are pleased to call me king, and I am proud to answer you that this our land is free. No living Roman rests on it. Our own dead and the Roman dead lie buried where the sea sings dirges. And I listened to the dirges. And the sea said: 'Again — and again — and again!' And I listened, and the wind blew. And the wind said: 'I blow sails over the waters.' And the rain fell and I listened. And the rain said: 'He who owns this shall defend it.'

"Then the sea gulls mewed above the surf, and I could see the cliffs of Gaul and the short seas between, and I listened. And the gulls cried: 'Gaul was set against Gaul—*Ohê*—Gaul is Cæsar's!'

"So I think not many new moons shall look down on us before we fight once more. For the Romans come as the springtide rolls up Thames—little by little at first, and then in full flood, with the eagles screaming overhead.

"Now ye are free, and ye have called me king. I am king. But ye shall choose between me and Cæsar before long. Cæsar shall not rule me, for I will die first. I will lie beside those men whose widows mourn them on the shore of Kent. I know a thousand who will die with me, aye, more than a thousand, rather than submit to Cæsar.

"Bear ye in mind: That if ye let a thousand of us die, lacking your aid, in defense of this good land we all call ours, they will have died in vain; and ye who value life more than you do your friends shall learn what a mean and melancholy thing is life under Cæsar's heel!

"Ye men of Lunden, whose chief I am— ye men of the Iceni, whose friend I am, whose chief I am not—I have spoken."

HE JUMPED down from the gate-post, hugged his wife again and led the way into the house, followed by his sixteen-year-old son and all the owners of the other chariots, many of whom bore Roman shields in proof that they had stood their ground against the invading legions.

He did not see Tros. He was too busy talking to Fflur and his three children and laughing at the antics of the hound that wriggled and yelped in front of him.

At the threshold a young girl gave a golden cup to Fflur, and he accepted it from Fflur's hands, drinking deep and murmuring a few words of ritual before striding into the hall.

There all was horse play and pandemonium in a minute, as the servants lighted torches in the sconces and the guests swarmed in to jockey for the best seats at the two long, laden tables, some shoving each other backward off the benches and wrestling on the floor, laughing as they held each other's wrists to keep the little daggers out of play, until a master of ceremonies pulled them apart and placed them at table arbitrarily, threatening to feed them with the dogs unless they acted seemly.

"Ye are not drunken yet — not yet!" he scolded.

The hall was splendid with woven hangings and stags' antlers. Great gold pitchers, marvelously chased, stood at the chief's end of the table. There were silver and golden goblets, and many of the trenchers on which meat and cakes were piled were of solid gold When they had dragged the throne chair to the table end Caswallon led Fflur to a smaller chair beside it, everybody standing while the women poured mead into the goblets and every man raised his goblet high, waiting for the chief to give the word to a high druid to pronounce the blessing.

It was then that Caswallon saw Tros, ten places down the table on his right hand, and paused, almost setting down his golden cup. But Tros shook his head and raised a hand, smiling, requesting silence, catching Orwic's eye next. And Orwic nodded to the chief.

So the sonorous chant of the druids began, and none drooped his head, but raised it because the hymn was of Mother Earth, who uplifts, from whom all human life emerges and to whom full reverence and loyalty and love is due.

There was chant, and response led by Caswallon, until the great beams rang to the refrain and they tossed the cups high, drinking deep to Mother Earth and to the gods who had sent the Romans sneaking back to sea at midnight.

"For let none doubt," Caswallon said, thumping down his golden goblet on the table and following that with a blow of his fist that made the rafters ring, "that the gods sent a man to preserve us! I pay honor to the men who died. I swear fellowship with them who fought and did not die.

"I say that, but for the gods who sent a storm, and a true man in the midst of it to harry Cæsar's fleet and break it, we were all dead men this day, or worse, with our wives at the Romans' mercy and our homes destroyed."

He sat down, and there was a little murmuring, because the men who had not fought were at least as proud of British heart and muscle as those who had. Let the druids praise the gods! Themselves were there to toast the men who fought, to eat beef and venison and to drink themselves drunker than the drunkest Roman who ever coveted in vain a good land fit to stay at home in!

Piety—good in its proper place, of course—struck a flat note at a banquet table, and a few men at the far end began a song about the stout hearts of Cair Lunden and the Northmen they had vanquished in the Thames.

Then the women took away the goblets—for they were precious—and put beakers in their place, made of a dull metal that the Britons knew how to blend of tin and iron, and the feasting began in earnest, each man's mouth too full of meat and mead and cakes, and anything else he could reach, to talk at all.

For a while there was no other sound but munching, and the laughter of the girls who poured the mead and took fresh trenchers of hot food from the serfs to the table—for no serf touched the table-cloth or poured a drink. It was Orwic who was first to speak above a murmur, three places down the table on Caswallon's right hand with two rosy-cheeked maids in very close attendance on him.

"We have thanked the gods, who are no doubt gratified," he remarked. "Shall we forget the man?"

Caswallon glanced at Tros and raised his fist to beat on the table for silence, but something in Orwic's eye restrained him. The chief stroked his long mustache instead, caught Fflur's eyes beside him, and waited.

"Skell of Pevensey," Orwic went on, nodding with a dry smile toward a heavy-shouldered man, red-bearded and rather white-skinned, who sat exactly facing Tros, "has been telling me how he destroyed Cæsar's fleet with the aid of a man, who, says Skell, was a pirate. Should Skell not tell that tale to all of us?"

Skell's mouth at the moment was too full for speech and, it might be, there was a lump in his throat beside; when he tried to wash the stuff down with a draught of mead it made him cough so that the man beside him had to thump him lustily between the shoulder blades.

There was plenty of time for Caswallon to meet Tros' eyes again. Tros laid a finger on his lips. But Conops, acting serving-man behind his master—to the annoyance of the girls, who would have enjoyed the sport of serving both of them since any foreigner was good to giggle at—leaned

over his shoulder, pretending to reach the meat, and whispered:

"Look to yourself now, master, before the mead brews madness! Flout that liar to his teeth before they are all too drunk to understand!"

But Tros thumped him in the belly with his elbow, being minded not to let a servant do his thinking for him, and aware of how much mead he could drink safely. By that time Skell had finished coughing.

"Skell shall tell us!" said Caswallon.

SO SKELL squared his shoulders and stood, after quarreling a moment with the men on either side, who did not want to let him push the bench back—it caught him in the knees, and a man can't boast to advantage with his knees bent forward between bench and table.

And the tale he told was an amazing one of storm and daring, better by far than what he had told Orwic, because he now had a gallon of mead beneath his belt.

He spoke of himself standing in a British ship's bow—he had stood at the helm when he told it to Orwic the first time—sword-slashing at the cables of the plunging Roman ships; but he said nothing of Cæsar's camp-fires streaming in the gale, or of the shouts of the Roman legionaries drowning in the surf as they tried to haul the smaller ships up-beach, as really happened.

He spoke only of himself, and once or twice of Tros, the lees of a neglected intuition keeping him from some liberties he might have taken with the name of the man who really had done the work.

His egotism stirred by mead, but not yet to the point of actual drunkenness, he told his tale well, particularly well, when no facts hampered him and he reached the account of his swim from a broken ship to the rock-bound shore of Vectis, in a gale that he had already described as the worst that ever rocked the cliffs of Britain. He described the swimming stroke he used, and how the crew of his broken ship cried out to him to save them:

"But sailors never can swim," he went on, "so the fish had their revenge. But I was sorry for them. When I reached the shore at last, and lay exhausted, I bethought me of that fellow Tros, and for a while I prayed for him to the gods who loose the winds and hurl the lightnings, that I might meet him again and shake him by the hand."

"By Nodens,* said Caswallon drily, "your prayer was granted! Tros——"

But Tros had already made excuse to leave the room and was standing in the porch outside the great front door, filling his lungs with the clean night mist, and watching the yelling crowd downhill burn Cæsar's effigy in chains.

It was not usual for a host to leave his place at table before all the courses had been tasted, but Caswallon called his oldest son, Tasciovanus, to take his place and followed Tros out to the porch.

And first he embraced him silently, then looked him in the eyes in the light of the horn lantern that hung from the porch beams.

"Tros," he said, "my brother Tros, if it had not been that Fflur received you and made you free of this, my house, I would not have sat still. I would have had you at the table end beside me, next where Fflur sits. But Fflur whispered of the gold, and it lies in her bed, where none but I dares go.

"She spoke of Cæsar's galley. My men shall bring that ship and all that it contains to Lunden. She whispered of what she had heard Skell say to Orwic. And you know Fflur, but you do not know Skell, who is a thorn in my right foot.

"I would have gainsaid in spite of Fflur's advice, had you not signed for silence. Fflur says she and you have not spoken together concerning Skell. Her gift I know. She has a second-sight, that forever leads me wisely when I heed her, but I find it strange that you should have sat so still while Skell stole for himself the glory that is rightly yours.'

"How is it strange?" Tros answered. "There is nothing for nothing in this world, and I am in dire need. If Skell desires that glory, he shall pay for it, unless you beg me to discharge the debt, for I am your friend, and I will not make trouble for you."

Caswallon laughed.

"Brother Tros, if you lack anything," he answered, "you have me to look to. But I would rather see Skell put to honest use than receive three favors from the gods!"

"Then leave him to me!" Tros said, stroking at his black beard, grinning like an ogre.

* A sea god of the Britons, later confused with Neptune by the Romans.

Caswallon grinned, too, pulling at his long mustache. Like all Britons, he admired guile, as long as it observed unwritten rules.

"He is yours—as the gold is yours—and the galley is yours," he answered. "But I warn you: Skell has a dark spirit that is too much, even for the druids. He is a doer of evil, a thief of reputations, a crafty coward, whose lies are as bold as his deeds are treacherous. And yet, by promises and what-not else he always has enough friends to keep him out of danger from the druids or from me.

"Four months ago he made believe to uncover a plot to poison me. He struck the goblet from my lips and slew the serf who brought it. I *think* he poisoned the mead with his own hand, but now he boasts of having saved my life and how can I deny it?

"I sent him to Gaul on an embassy, hoping Cæsar would pack him off to Rome, perhaps. But Cæsar gave him presents, and now Skell boasts he has more influence with Cæsar than an army of a thousand men. If I had killed him for acting as Cæsar's spy, there are plenty who would rebel against me—for Cæsar sends money now and then, some of which Skell distributes.

"Skell was in Hythe when I went there to raise men, and when you put to sea in the storm to break up Cæsar's fleet; but he did not see you, because he did not want me to see him. There was a doubt in his mind then as to whether the Romans might not make good their foothold. No doubt he saw what happened, from the cliffs, and doubtless he believed you drowned, as I did, as we all did, until the beacon told of another Northman in the Thames and Fflur set out to fight an enemy and found *you*.

"Skell knows I can not swear he didn't put to sea in one of those ships from Hythe, for the one you took, you smashed, and another is missing. It is likely Skell sunk that other one to lend truth to his boast that it was he who did the work that night. It will be hard to prove, for he covers his tracks well sometimes. But what can *you* want, Tros, with such a fanged louse as this Skell is? He will fasten to you like a limpet to a rock. He will suck you dry!

"He seems even a worse rascal than I hoped!" Tros answered. "My father, who is Cæsar's prisoner in Gaul, might not like to come free, if a good man were the victim in his place."

"I had forgotten your father," Caswallon said awkwardly.

"My father may be in chains, and I must make haste," Tros replied. "If Cæsar should learn it was I who smashed his fleet, my father would be made to pay the penalty. Skell seems sent by the very gods."

"You shall speak with Skell!"

CASWALLON clapped Tros on the shoulder and returned into the house. Tros stood watching the bonfires that had been heaped in midstreet at fifty-yard intervals all the way up the hill. Wild figures like demons danced around them, yelling, with long hair streaming, some waving torches, some holding hands.

The mist was crimson with the bonfire glare, distorting things, making men and trees seem nearer than they were, but the din seemed very far away, because the mist refused to carry it.

Tros watched until Skell came out alone and, closing the heavy door with a thud behind him, stood eying him in silence.

Very slowly indeed, almost inch by inch, Tros faced him, conscious of his sword-hilt but avoiding any semblance of a move toward it.

"You touch your dagger. Why?" he asked.

Skell blinked at him. His eyes, perhaps, were not yet quite accustomed to the fog-dimmed lantern light. But his throat moved too. He had a face that looked strong rather than crafty, except that the mouth was thin-lipped and a bit irregular. His red mustache was bushy, instead of drooping as most Britons wore theirs. His hair was shorter than the ordinary, and his neck was like a bull's.

"Speak!" he commanded, still clutching at the dagger-hilt. "Why did you not name yourself to me? I am a dangerous man on whom to play such tricks!"

The snarl and the sneer in his voice were icy cold. He was a calculator of men's fears, but not so Tros, who liked to turn strength to his own use.

"So I tricked you?" Tros answered. His voice was almost friendly. There was a laugh in it. He even turned a little sidewise, as if off guard, being able to afford

that because he could see the blade of Conops' knife.

Conops had found another way out of the house, a good man-servant being better than the best dog, and was crouching in the shadow where the honeysuckle had been blown through the open porch side by a recent wind.

Skell sneered again, his thin lip curling until one side of his mustache pointed almost at the corner of his eye. He said something in a low voice and had to repeat it, because a salvo of applause and laughter in the hall echoed under the porch and drowned his words:

"Do you think you can make a fool of me?"

Tros' amber eyes grew narrow as he judged his man.

"I have heard a many men lie for a many reasons," he said, smiling, and again his voice was almost friendly. "When I tell a lie, it is to save my skin, or possibly some other man's. Boasting gives me no amusement, because I have found I must pay for it sooner or later. Do you pay like a man, or do you bilk your creditors?"

Skell's hand was on his dagger hilt, but he relaxed and leaned against the door, with his head to one side, trying to read Tros' eyes by the lantern rays.

"I supposed you were drowned," he said at last. "There was no harm in taking a dead man's credit. You should have made yourself known if you wanted——"

"Ah-h-h!"

Tros interrupted, with a sudden gesture of his right hand that made Skell almost draw the dagger.

"Does a trader *want* the skins he sells? Because he does not want them, does he give them without price?"

"Money?" Skell asked him, sneering.

"My price—at my convenience!" Tros answered.

And at last he stood square up to Skell, and drew his long sword six inches from the scabbard. Skell did not move, because Conops came out of the shadow then and slapped a knife blade on the palm of his left hand.

"I am able to care for myself," said Skell, "but I will listen to your proposal."

His heel struck the door behind him twice.

"A third time, and when they open they shall carry you in feet first!" said Tros. "For if I should run a sword point into you, none could blame Caswallon for that. If I should say why I did it, is there a Briton who would blame me?"

"Speak your proposal," Skell answered, "and make haste."

He spoke on the intake of breath, for Tros had drawn the long sword, taking one step backward. Skell's angry eyes recognized a man who knew his own mind on land as well as sea, and knew how not to tell his mind, which is a sign of great strength.

"I have spoken it," Tros answered. "There was no price named when you took my credit for your own gain. Now the credit is yours, for I have no use for spoiled goods. But the price of it is mine. Do I deal with a thief, or with a man who pays willingly?"

"I pay," said Skell, "if you are reasonable."

"Skell," said Tros, "I am so reasonable, I would not give a drachma for your promise, at sword's point or before a thousand witnesses! You shall plight a pledge. Thereto I will add persuasion, since a thrashed horse runs slowly unless fed."

"Pledge? I have neither money nor jewels by me."

"I have money and I have jewels. I would let both go for a friend's sake," Tros retorted. "You would forfeit yours to vent your spleen! Nay, Skell, you shall give a pledge that you will risk all to redeem!"

"I think they will come for us soon," said Skell.

He was growing nervous. He could no more stand his ground against a strong will and uncertainty than a bull can face the whip.

"I am cornered; I yield," he said, trying to say it proudly.

"You shall come with me into the hall," said Tros, "and you shall say this: that you have wagered you can bring my father safely out of Gaul, or wherever else he is Cæsar's prisoner. And the stake is your life against Cæsar's galley that they are now towing up the Thames."

Skell made a gesture of ridicule, but Tros continued, speaking slowly:

"They will ask why you made such a wager, for they know you, Skell, and they will doubt your word. You will answer, in terms of what you have already said

without my leave, that you and I did a venture together against Cæsar, whereby we are pledged to mutual esteem, but that I seized plunder, and you none, concerning which an argument arose between us, you claiming a share in what I seized, but I dissenting.

"They will believe *that* tale readily enough. So you will tell them that, you, knowing Cæsar and being fond of daring exploits, proposed this wager to me, and I agreed. Thereafter, Skell, I think it would be dangerous for you to play me an act of treachery, for these Britons are strict about wagers and bargains and the treatment of a guest—I being their guest, remember.

"They will watch me, and they will watch you, so the temptation will be very small to stick a knife into my back, which if you should do, or if another should do, they would instantly suspect you of having done."

"I neither know your father nor where to look for him," Skell answered. "The thing is impossible."

"Skell, so was your story about smashing Cæsar's fleet impossible, since it was I who did that, and you were not there! You will say what I bid you say, or I will march you now into the hall and name you liar before all the company!

"I see you understand what that would mean, Skell. Your sword against mine, in the fog, before a hundred witnesses! Choose then! I have offered you a chance to win a Roman galley and all the power that should go with owning such a ship, or a swifter chance to prove your manhood with your sword against mine this night."

HE DID not give Skell long to think, but ordered Conops to open the front door wide, and there they stood, the three of them together with the firelight in their faces, Tros with a naked sword in his right hand, Conops with a naked knife and only Skell with his weapon sheathed.

A roar went up as a hundred voices asked the meaning of drawn weapons, and a bench upset as the feasters faced about. Caswallon rose from his great chair at the table end, and Skell had only time to draw three breaths before he had to answer, for Tros kept still and some one had to speak.

"It seems, in Samothrace men bind a wager by an oath made on a sword blade," Skell said, with a catch in his throat.

Then, because he had gone too far to withdraw, he continued in a loud voice, laying his hand on Tros' broad shoulder:

"This is Tros, who aided me in smashing Cæsar's ships. I did not recognize him until now, but he knew me on the instant. Tros will tell you of the wager we have made."

But Tros was not to be caught so easily. When they had done drinking to him and shouting his name until the rafters rang with it, he stood—his toes beyond the threshold still, because he had not sheathed his sword—and, showing his strong teeth in a grin such as men do not learn the use of without earning the right to it let loose a "Ho-ha-hah!" that shook his shoulders.

"Nay!" he answered. "For you all know Skell, so you shall have Skell's word on what has passed between us."

And he smote Skell such a slap between the shoulder blades as made him take a quick step forward. Whereat Caswallon, bending his head to catch Fflur's whisper, sat down and called on Skell to speak, and all the company roared to Tros to shut the door to keep the fog outside.

But Tros continued standing at the threshold, and did not sheathe his sword until Skell stood thoroughly committed by his own lips and had vowed before all that company that he would rescue Tros' father, Perseus, Prince of Samothrace, from Cæsar's camp in Gaul or from wherever else Cæsar might have sent him, or die in the attempt. Skell made the best of a bad bargain, boasting with his chin high and with an easy, reckless motion of the shoulders.

"And for my part," Tros said then, "I will gladly give Cæsar's galley to a man so shrewd and brave as can accomplish that!"

He sheathed his sword then, and strode in, shutting the great door.

And from then until nearly dawn, while the company, growing more and more uproarious, wove Skell into a net of lies of his own spinning, Caswallon remained very sober, not summoning Tros to sit beside him lest Skell should appear slighted, and he did not care to have Skell sit at the table-end.

Skell also remained sober, because the strong mead could not bite a brain that had so much embarrassment to think of. And Tros, who was the son of an Initiate of Samothrace, never drank more than comforted the stomach without touching the

brain at all, because "drink that dulls the senses," say the Ancients, "is an insult to the Soul, and to refuse the hospitality of strangers is an insult to their kindness; wherefore, wisely observe temperance in all things."

CHAPTER IV

THE PHOENICIAN TIN TRADER

AND at dawn, when the company was mostly drunk and Fflur had sent away the women—but she stayed, since none dared offer her indignity—Caswallon strode out to fill his lungs with air and to watch the watery sun rise over the swamps to eastward.

There was a bank of white mist where the Thames flowed, and the tops of oak trees loomed like fantoms through a cloud that blew before the morning breeze. Downstreet, above the smoky embers of abandoned bonfires, was the blackened shred of Cæsar's effigy still swinging from its chain, stretched from tree to tree. In lamplit darkness by the waterside was singing, where sailors from the foreign ships held revelry of their own. And here and there a house light made a pale halo in the fog.

"No need for Northmen to burn Lunden," Caswallon said, yawning and stretching himself. "One of these drunken nights we will do it for them, and that were worse than a defeat. Oh, Lunden is a good town!"

Tros, kneeling to wet his hands and face in the dew on the grass before the gate, looked up and laughed at him.

"If Cæsar had known of Lunden, he would be here now!" he answered. "In war he is unconquerable if he knows of a point to drive at. Now the boasting is over, how did he really leave Britain?"

"Oh, he used the metal of some broken ships to repair the others, and a few more small ships came from Gaul. And while we made ready to storm his camp he slipped away at midnight, leaving the camp-fires burning."

"He would not have gone," said Tros, "if he had known of Lunden. I know Cæsar. He will write to Rome of a victory, but defeat will rankle in him. It will eat his heart. I will wager you, this minute he is laying plans to try again, and his spies are on the way. The spies will tell him you eat off golden dishes, and that your wife—Cæsar would rather steal a king's wife and enjoy her shame than play at any other sport the world holds."

"You are as black haired as a raven, and you croak like one!" Caswallon answered.

"I am your friend."

Tros stood up, his beard all wet with dew. Caswallon looked him in the eyes and nodded, then wetted his hands at a yew tree and laved his face in the dew until his long mustache dropped in untidy strands below his chin.

Fflur came then, all new-dressed and smiling, wearing amber jewelry and twisted the mustache until it hung respectably, then kissed him and called him some absurd name in an undertone.

Two girls and Orwic were in attendance on her, but Orwic was so drunk he could hardly walk straight although he used a spear to lean on, and the girls were pushing him surreptitiously, giggling at his attempts to appear dignified. The only remark Orwic made was that druids were more trouble than they were worth.

"If they drank more and preached less, a gentleman could have more patience with them," he concluded.

Caswallon, with an arm around Fflur, led the way toward a grove of yews within a wooden paling. In a clearing in the midst six druids stood before an unhewn rock, whose highest point faced the rising sun. A druid knelt, peering along the rock and down a vista between the yews, toward where the sun's rim was beginning to appear above the mist.

There were rock seats spaced at intervals around the clearing, with a bank of grass-grown earth behind for less important folk. Caswallon sat on the seat that faced the altar and the others took places on either hand, the women to the left.

"The sun has been up for an hour," said Orwic, hiccoughing. "It's all nonsense waiting for it to touch the top of that old rock. Who cares anyhow?"

But he bowed his head when the kneeling druid raised both hands and those who were standing chanted the orizon, each in turn advancing as he sang to lay flowers, corn, honey, earth and water on the altar stone. Then the old high druid turned with his back to the sun, the others facing him, and blessed them sonorously. That was all.

"Doubtless you do these things better in

Samothrace," Caswallon remarked as they filed out.

He seemed in a mood to find fault with anything at all.

"I know nothing better than the best a man can do," Tros answered, "and no hour better than the dawn."

Fflur smiled at that and stroked Caswallon's hand that was on her shoulder, but he turned and faced Tros as they reached the gate in the paling:

"I like that you accepted Fflur's word that the galley and the gold are yours. That you promised the galley to Skell, I do not like," he said abruptly.

"Is it yet Skell's? Has he earned it?" Tros replied.

"Skell never did earn the cost of a horse's bellyful, but he has made me more trouble than I can count," Caswallon said grimly. "You have set the mischief working in his mind. You have forced him to be up and doing. It had entered my thought to kill him for his lies about Cæsar's ships; now I can not kill him, because you have given him the right to make good his pledge before any other man may call him to account. That is our law."

"It is a good law," Tros replied.

"Now Skell will go to Cæsar. And I must let him go, or else discredit you, who have been my friend."

"The man who claims he wrecked all Cæsar's ships will go to Cæsar!"

Tros grinned craftily. Caswallon shook his head. Fflur glanced from one man to the other, and Orwic poked with his spear at the tip of Tros' sword.

"You should have gutted Skell last night with that thing," he remarked.

BUT Fflur was pleased that there had been no murder done. There was seldom a drunken feast without bloodshed afterwards, and she had the name of being too tight with the purse strings, because she opposed feasting whenever she could make her voice heard.

She suggested it was time to sleep and led her grumbling lord and master by the hand, making the girls laugh by the way she tugged at him as if he were a stubborn horse being led to the chariot pole.

They entered the hall—it reeked of mead and woodsmoke and the after-stench of food—where most of the men were snoring on the floor, or on benches against the wall, and the dogs were cracking bones under the table.

Caswallon strode off to his own room, but Fflur went first with Tros to the guest chamber and stood by while he threw out two Iceni who had made themselves free of the bed. Then she kissed him and said:

"Tros, you did well, because you must certainly set your father free by some means. And Cæsar will try again, so you did doubly well, for you are more dangerous to him and a stronger friend to us as long as Cæsar does not know you broke his ships. But he *will* know it, if Skell should reach him; I suppose you understand that and are counting on Skell's treachery. Sleep well, and at noon Caswallon will have changed his mind."

But Tros did not sleep for a long time. First he sent Conops to find Skell and watch him.

"If Skell goes, I wish to know where he goes, and what reason he gives. Let him not see you are watching him, but make talk with the maids and servingmen and grooms," he commanded.

Then, very shortly after that, there came the old Phœnician trader, still wrapped in his camels-hair, greeting Tros, between bouts of coughing, with courteous eastern phrases, sitting cross legged on the bed when Tros invited him, and naming himself Hiram-bin-Ahab.

He had gold rings, chased with strange designs, on all his fingers, and a gold band on his forehead very much like the one that Tros wore. They exchanged peculiar signs, and then strange passwords in a said-to-be-forgotten tongue that sounded like challenge and answer or some sort of magic ritual.

After which they shook hands, taking a long time about it, looking straight into each other's eyes. Thereafter they conversed in Greek.

"My son, I am sure *now* you are not mad," said the Phœnician. "Why did you act like a madman? The Britons keep their secrets well, but even I know Skell lied and that it was you who wrecked Cæsar's fleet. The very maids who wait on table know it. Why did you let Skell take the credit to himself?"

"I take what the gods send my way," Tros answered. "Skell is a mean fish, but I have him in my net."

"Son, you are a stranger in a strange land.

I foresmell difficulties. Skell is an older man than you, and I am older than the two of you together. I warn you, such men as he is are the same the wide world over. Skell——"

—"will run to Cæsar!" Tros interrupted. "What else can he do? He fears to fight me. The good gods know it is not in him to keep faith. He has no more thought of rescuing my father than of loving me. Yet he can not lie idle here with that wager on his hands or the Britons will mock him, and he will have no rights whatever—and no peace.

"He must pretend to keep faith. And how can he do that unless he leaves Britain for Gaul? I wish I knew a captain who was sailing for Caritia* presently, and who would take Skell with him."

"Son," said the old man, screwing up his face and rubbing the end of his nose with a lean forefinger, "I would not go near Cæsar for all Cæsar's gold—*keh-keh-keh-khaah*, these fogs!—because Cæsar would take my cargo of tin and would give me for it an order on Rome for money—*phaagh!*"

"Did you obtain tin here in Lunden?" Tros asked him.

"Nay, at Ictis,† where they make it into ingots like sheeps' knuckles. I traded my Tyrian dye and my silken stuff for tin, and did well, for the Britons are a reasonable people when they want a thing badly enough.

Then I came here to hide, because I heard of Roman galleys off the coast of Gaul. You know, if those overbearing rogues catch sight of you they send their liburnians‡ in chase and ask for all sorts of documents until they chance on one you haven't. After which, if they want your cargo, they just take it. It is all very legal, I don't doubt. They say the Romans are great law makers."

"And you count on the Roman ships being laid up for the winter now?"

"Surely," he answered. "You know the Romans are no sailors. I have stepped a new mast. My men have made and rove new cordage. The British women have sewed me a sail out of linen that I think will stand the storms off the west coast of Hispania.** It is a small sail, very stout, with good, wide strapping on all the seams and with a stout cord all around the edge of it. My crew have scoured the hull and payed the seams.

"We have food aboard, good, dry venison and apples. Those are very good against the scurvy, Tros, and they keep better than our Mediterranean fruit. Water for four months in new oaken casks that have been well soaked to kill the bitter taste. I have raised the freeboard more than half a cubit from bow to stern, using oaken planks."

"Better a big sea on an open deck than a lesser one caught between bulwarks where it can't escape!" Tros cautioned him.

"Ah! But I have hinged the planking from above, and the waves can pour off as the ship rolls. You had better come with me, Tros," he said, red-eyed from another bout of coughing. "I have lost three of my men in a drunken brawl by the riverside. I bought three Britons to replace them, but —I will pay you, I will pay you a percentage if you come. I grow old, too old for storming through the Gates of Hercules*** in winter. This is my last journey. Come with me to Alexandria, you and that one-eyed fellow, Conops, and when I have sold my tin to Esias the Jew, the ship is yours, Tros!"

Tros shook his head, grinning kindly.

"I must go to Caritia," he answered. "My father was the pilot who had charge of Cæsar's cavalry. The cavalry never reached Britain. Caius Julius Cæsar will blame my father for that, and just enough. My father Perseus is a Prince of Samothrace; he will not lend himself to such purposes as Cæsar's.

"I don't doubt he led the cavalry astray, even as I tried to wreck all the rest of the fleet in the quicksands—I being no initiate, and therefore not wholly averse to drowning a few thousand Romans!"

"Your father must be dead long since!" said the Phœnician. "Cæsar will have had him beaten to death."

"I think not," Tros answered. "My father is wise in the Mysteries. He would know how to speak with Cæsar. Cæsar might torture him; I have seen him torture others, with fire and ropes and wedges and all manner of cruelty; it was Cæsar who ordered Conops' eye put out in return for a saucy answer. But Cæsar is no such fool

* Calais.

† Ictis—probably the Isle of Wight, although some authorities say Thanet, which was really an island in those days.

‡ Liburnians—small, fast boats, very lightly built.

** Hispania—Spain.

*** The Straits of Gibraltar.

as to kill whom he hopes to use. I expect to find my father living."

"He were better dead!"

The Phœnician, coughed until every sinew of his frame was wrenched and he lay back gasping.

"So you and I might think, Hiram-bin-Ahab. But such men as my father, by the oath of their Initiation, must live as long as life can be spun out, enduring all things. That is a charge imposed on them when they are chosen for the Inner Secrets."

"God spare me from such initiation!" said Hiram, coughing again with his face among the shawls. "*Kuff-kuff*—this one last voyage and—*heyh-yeyh*—then I am ready if my time has come!"

Tros sat thinking, cudgeling his brain.

"It is early yet for the Roman ships to be laid up for the winter," he said after a while.

"But I will die if I stay here! I *must* go, I *must* go!" said the Phœnician, breathing through his nose.

"Then you need a safe-conduct that Romans will recognize," said Tros, slapping his thigh, for a bold idea had dawned on him. "The liburnians might put to sea in any moderate gale and overhaul you. What if I escort you with a Roman bireme all the way to the farthest western limit of the coast of Gaul? If I promise to do that, will you give Skell a passage to Caritia first?"

THE PHŒNICIAN propped himself against the wall and stared through red-rimmed eyes. The shutter was closed tight, but a dim light filtered past the edges of the leather curtain that hung in the doorway and they could see each other's faces well enough.

"Your eyes are the color of gold, and you do not look mad!" said the old man.

"Nay!" Tros answered. "And I will pass you by the Romans as far as the corner of Gaul, if you will first pass Skell into Caritia."

Hiram-ben-Ahab turned that over in his mind. His cargo of tin was as good as lost if the Romans should learn of it. They claimed a monopoly of all commerce in tin, because of their own tin mines in Spain and their own need of tin for making bronze for military purposes.

Even if he should succeed in passing the Gates of Hercules undetected, he would still risk being caught in the Mediterranean, in which case he would be made to hand over his tin against Roman promises to pay, promises which he would have to discount with the Roman moneylenders if he ever hoped to cash them.

And all of that Tros understood so well that he could almost read the thoughts passing in the old man's mind. Almost, but not quite. Hiram-ben-Ahab was fifty years older than Tros and could see four sides to everything, plus a fifth that included unpredictable contingencies.

"I see what you intend, Tros," he said, at last, after another long bout of coughing. "You will take that galley and keep far enough to sea to escape detection. But that will not help me if I should run in close to Caritia. They would ask for documents."

"Easy!" You shall have them!" Tros exploded.

Hiram-ben-Ahab stared.

"I will give you an order in Latin with Cæsar's seal on it!"

Tros' ribs began to shake with silent laugher, for the idea was growing in his mind.

"Silly! A child's notion!" said the Phœnician. "Talk sensibly. Skell would tell the Romans all about the bireme in the offing. What then?"

"He will not," Tros answered, "for he will not know."

And he laughed again, because his humor reveled in farseeing subtleties.

"We have a perfect instrument in Skell. If I say one thing to Skell, and you say another—wait! Your ship is loaded? Water and stores aboard? The crew drunk half the time?"

"Aye, forever drunk, and I can't prevent. They earn money calking boats and mending cordage for the Britons, and they spend it like madmen along the waterside. They will be fit for nothing when we have been a week at sea."

"Why spend that week at sea?" Tros answered. "The ship can lie at anchor down the Thames, with the crew all snug aboard and sobering up. Have you a good mate, or shall I lend you my man Conops? We can trust Conops to keep Skell safe aboard, even if the ship lies at anchor a month!

"Moreover, maybe I can frighten Skell so that he'll be willing enough to hide down Thames on shipboard. Then, when I have

made the galley ready, you row down to your ship and wait one more day, making the tide the excuse, or the wind, or whatever you please.

"And I will take the galley on the tide, being careful to pass you in the night-time, so that Skell shall not see the galley, but I will make a signal in passing that you will recognize."

"Madness! Madness!" said the old Phœnician.

But his eyes were brighter than they had been and his thin lips twitched with the beginnings of a smile.

"And at sea," said Tros, "when you have left the cliffs of Britain on your starboard quarter and are headed toward Gaul, I will put about, discover you, and hoist a challenge in the name of the Senate and the Roman People.

"You douse your sail. You lower a boat and send Conops to me, with two other men. I do as any Roman commander would and keep Conops on my ship as hostage for your obedience; but I send the other two men back with permission to you to land Skell in Caritia.

"Thus Skell will not know I am not a Roman, and you will have a good excuse for landing him in a small boat as swiftly as possible."

"But suppose, then, that the Romans put out from Caritia and search me?" the Phœnician objected. "And they will," he added. "And they will! I know the Romans!"

"The officers who put out in liburnians to search ships are not important people who will dare to question Cæsar's seal or act high handedly with the commander of a bireme looking on," Tros answered. "And now I have thought of a better idea!

"You will wait, tacking to and fro outside the bar until the liburnians do come out, since that will look more regular, and one of the documents that I shall give you will be an authority to proceed to Ostia with tin, under my escort.

"They will see my bireme waiting for you in the offing. And we will take care to persuade Skell thoroughly in advance that you really are sailing for the Roman port, not Alexandria. Thus, if they should ask Skell anything, he is likely to confirm what you say."

"Maybe, and maybe not!" said the Phœnician. "Skell would be more likely to tell the truth by accident, if one should depend on him for a lie. He has an evil spirit."

"I can cover that point, too," said Tros. "The man is vain. I can suggest to him that, since you are on your way to Ostia, he should write a letter to the Roman Senate, for you to deliver, recounting his own services to Cæsar. Let him ask for a minor appointment of some sort. He will be so full of that notion, once the thought is in his head, that he will never suspect you of not intending to sail to Ostia."

Hiram-ben-Ahab folded and unfolded his hands in sudden jerks, sucked his yellow teeth and shook his head.

"It is a grave risk. It is a foolish risk, as if the sea and the storms were not enough!"

"I have gold!" said Tros, and for a moment the old man's eyes looked brighter, but he shook his head again.

"I would not take gold or any payment for a service to a Prince of Samothrace," he answered. "Nay, nay! I am no Roman to put a price on such things!"

"But if you should lose your cargo at the Romans' hands, would it be unseemly of me to reimburse you for it with Cæsar's gold?" asked Tros. "I guarantee your cargo, as far as the corner of Gaul, subject to your service in this matter. Moreover, the letter I shall give you bearing Cæsar's seal should pass you through the Gates of Hercules, if there are any triremes thereabout, and should make you free of any port you happen to put into for supplies and water, or repairs. I will forge it skilfully, using good sheep's parchment, of which there is plenty in Cæsar's chest."

"Well, I will have to see those documents before I strike a bargain with you."

Hiram-ben-Ahab frowned pessimistically, but without effect on Tros, who understood Phœnicians as well as he knew Greeks. If the Phœnician had smiled, he might have been in doubt as to the outcome. As it was, he was sure the old man was considering the proposal in all its bearings.

Craftily then, he struck his master stroke, judging his man, giving him full scope without the prejudice of bargaining.

"Hiram-ben-Ahab," he said, "you are old, and you say this is your last voyage. I will forge that document and give it to you, whether you see fit to help me or not. You shall have it freely to help you past the Roman ports. Now feel free to say yes or

no concerning Skell, because I will do what I can for you in any case."

CHAPTER V

A SITTING OF THE COURT OF ADMIRALTY; B. C. 56

AT NOON, when as many as had slept away the fumes of mead had eaten, and Fflur had set some women to making a new purple cloak for Tros after the pattern of the torn one he was wearing when he came, Tros asked for the box containing Cæsar's memoranda and went through the documents carefully, whistling to himself.

Now and then he laughed. Now and then he rolled a parchment thoughtfully and stowed it in a small, square wicker basket he had begged from Fflur, and when he had finished he entrusted that basket to her to keep for him.

"There is better in that than a mint!" he said darkly.

But as Fflur could not read the Roman script, and especially not the shorthand notes of Cæsar's secretary, she had to take his word for it.

Then Caswallon came, in a great good humor because he had been to the stables, where the sight of new horses had pleased him mightily.

As Fflur had prophesied, he had changed his mind already. He sat on the porch rail, where Tros was listening to Conops' account of how Skell slept at last after whispering with a man who afterward went away toward the riverside.

"Sleeps with one eye open, I wager!" Caswallon interrupted, scratching on the porch planking with the point of a throwing spear. Then, as if the news were unimportant, he added:

"They have towed that galley of yours to the pool below the ford.* They ask my leave to burn it when night comes. They say there are Cæsar's clothes on board; they want to make a new effigy of Cæsar wrapped in his own scarlet cloak and burn it, galley and all, in mid Thames. They love a bonfire. What say you?"

"I say what Fflur said, that the ship is mine," Tros answered, trying not to betray alarm.

But Caswallon detected and enjoyed it thoroughly. His blue-stained white skin, his trousers and the spear almost suggested a barbarian, but his easy manner and the quiet smile under the long mustache belonged to a man of many parts, and he could play them all well.

"But you wagered the galley with Skell. Why not dress up Skell in Cæsar's clothes and burn the lot?" he suggested. He looked deadly serious. "Skell would fancy himself in Cæsar's second-best scarlet cloak. We could trick him aboard with the promise of that, and the rest could be recorded as an accident."

"Skell must not even *see* that galley!" Tros exclaimed excitedly. "God of fogs and foolishness! Can you think of no better use for a well-found ship than to burn her for fools to shout at?"

Caswallon pulled at his mustache and did not let his hand drop until his face was fixed in an expression of boiled stupidity. He was enjoying himself thoroughly, and so was Orwic, who had got down off a squealing horse to discover what his chief's and Tros' talk was about.

"Use for a galley?" said Caswallon. "If she lay here in the Thames my men would never rest until they had put to sea in her and drowned themselves. They would all be captains and the ship would have to go a dozen ways at once to suit them!

"As for my using her, I crossed to Gaul once in a fair-sized ship, and I suppose I returned, since here I am. I remember I lay on my back to stop the vomiting, but the sea went on pitching victuals out of me.

"When I stood, clinging to the mast, I acted like an eel up ended, so weak kneed I was, with the world going round and round and the ship spinning in the opposite direction. It was a rotten waste of good food, Tros, to make no other argument about it. The sea was intended for fish, but I am no fish. For me, not one foot farther than I can ride a horse into the surf! What say you, Orwic?"

"She would make a fine sight burning with her sail set. There hasn't been such a sight as that since the Northmen burned Cair Lunden," Orwic drawled.

"Well, come and let's look at her, before they burn her anyhow!" Caswallon suggested, adding, as Orwic whistled to the grooms to bring a chariot:

"Wake Skell. Tell him the word he sent that they should burn the galley has reached my ears. Warn him I am angry that he

* Just below where London Bridge now stands.

should try to creep out of a wager made at my board by causing the stake at issue to be burned! Bid him keep out of my sight. And then set men to watch him, or he will run before Tros is ready, for —— knows what, Tros has some mischief up his sleeve!

"Tell the men to mock him for a shirkbet if he shows his face outdoors. Tell the girls to mock him. Tell the grooms he is not to have chariot or horse and let them steal his own two horses from the stable behind his house. Tell him his only chance of being reckoned a man is to take ship very soon for Gaul."

He jumped into the chariot and drove away almost before Tros could swing up beside him, sending the horses headlong over the rear of the hill toward the river, watching their forefeet, taking more delight in them, apparently, than in all the other details of a kingdom.

"For a horse is a horse and you know where his feet will land," he said presently, continuing his thoughts aloud. "But Skell is neither horse nor herring. None knows what Skell will do, except that he will do a mean thing and in some way filch men's praise for it!

"I spoke with Fflur, and she said, let him go to Gaul, where if Cæsar whips him none can blame me. Fflur is always right, although I know Skell will offer himself to Cæsar, because there is nothing else left for him to do. I hope Cæsar flogs him and flays him!"

He double-cracked the driving whip over the horses' heads until they galloped madly.

"I hate to own that I dare not throw Skell's carcass to the crows, but that is truth, Tros. He has few friends, if any, but he has bought the loyalty of men who look for more at his hands, and it is not wise just now to stir their anger."

It was no road they took, but a track deep rutted in the clay where ten-horse teams had dragged sled loads of cord wood and charcoal, and it ended at a ford:

"Where I will some day build a bridge," Caswallon said.

THE galley lay in midpool, made fast to an oaken pile that bent like a bow under the weight of ship and tide, and she was in worse shape than when Tros left her, because the twenty men in charge had seen fit to carry all the loot on deck, and there had been some fighting with the crew, who claimed sole right to all of it.

Caswallon drove into the ford until the horses were almost swimming, then roared at the top of his lungs to know whether Lunden had no boats, that a king must get his feet wet. So they brought him a boat and rowed him and Tros to the galley, where the twenty men in charge were all sulky because they had missed the feasting of the night before.

"And not drunk yet!" as one of them complained, "although the men who did the towing are ashore and drunker than bees already!"

Liquor they had, however. There was an earthen jar of *curmi** on the poop and they were dipping it out with their little peaked helmets.† They pledged Caswallon in the stuff, and then Tros, after which they staged a dance in all the Roman costumes they had found aboard, putting Cæsar's scarlet cloak and a golden laurel wreath on Caswallon and dressing Orwic in the bed sheets to represent the King of Bithynia, of whom even Britain had heard. There were some very improper interludes at that stage of the game, of which the druids and Fflur, for instance, would have disapproved.

Caswallon did a very excellent imitation of the falling sickness, much more realistic than the real thing, because he had never seen an actual case of it and only knew Cæsar's reputation, which had naturally been exaggerated.

They pretended to bleed him in the silver bowl, using *curmi* for the blood, and the ceremony following would almost have shocked Cæsar himself, because they had only heard vague stories about Roman Gods, and the Venus Genetrix had been represented to them as a most improper lady.

They had fired away all the arrows from the two poop arrow engines at ducks on their way up Thames and, having hit nothing, were of opinion that mechanical contrivances were no good, having already forgotten the dreadful work those engines did in the fighting off the Kentish beach.

And they thought the iron dolphin swinging from the yardarm was some kind of

* A sort of beer, made without hops—for there were none in Britain in those days—producing, according to the Roman writer Posidonius, "pain in the head and injury to the nerves."

† Just like modern jockey-caps, only made of iron. They may have been the origin of the modern jockey-cap, since the Britains were a race of horsemen, and Britain is a country in which scores of traditional customs, the wearing of trousers included, have survived until today.

Roman deity hung there to pacify the waves, until one of them cut the halyard—"to introduce the foreign godlet to the good god Lud who keeps the Thames"—and it crashed through the bottom of a boat alongside, sinking it instantly.

Tros did not recover the dolphin until next day, when Conops dived and found the halyard, after which it took a dozen men two hours to haul the murderous contrivance from the mud.

It was only little by little that Caswallon, at Tros' urging, persuaded them to lay all the loot in heaps on the main deck, after which he announced that Tros had promised full and fair division among such seamen as remained of the sixty who had first set out with him.

But Tros and Caswallon had done some whispering and Caswallon claimed the ship as lawful prize by right of capture, Fflur and his own men having saved it from the river pirates. He declared that was the law of Britain and, since there was no higher court than himself, it did not do the seamen any good to grumble, albeit they did grumble noisily, until some of the gentlemen in peaked iron caps struck them for improper language to their betters.

Then Caswallon held an auction, Orwic acting auctioneer, and Tros did all the bidding, naming what he considered fair prices in view of the state of the market.

The Britons had spent all their money on horse flesh and, except the seamen, who, of course, never had any money, were mostly in debt to the Iceni in the bargain. It was distinctly a falling market, but Tros was generous. The total came to a bigger sum than those seamen had ever dreamed of owning.

Caswallon, after eight or nine attempts, succeeded in dividing the total equally and —what was much more difficult—in persuading them that the calculation was correct. Then he ordered Tros to pay them in gold pieces out of Cæsar's treasure, undertaking himself to change the money into honest British coin from his own mint at Verulam, whereby the seamen learned for the first time what they had missed by failing to kill Tros and throw him overboard at Thames-mouth. And being seamen, they changed their opinion of Tros and began to consider him a right good captain.

By that time it was dusk, and women and children had flocked aboard to laugh at everything, especially at Cæsar's underwear. The women were set to carrying everything that could be carried to Caswallon's house, shields, armor and swords included, and when a new guard had been set over the ship they sent for chariots and all drove home to supper.

But first Tros went alone to the house where Skell lay sulking, a small house, very well built and thatched with wheat straw, two hundred yards away from Caswallon's paling. Some said that he owned the house, and some that he did not, but he lived in it, which was the main thing.

And the seamen, who had followed Tros to get their money, joined with the children and grooms outside, who were pointing fingers at the house and singing a sort of nursery-rime about a man who boasted and ran away. It seemed to delight them hugely that Skell's name fitted in the rime, and to Tros' ears it sounded something like:

> "Skell, Skell the Northman's son
> Told a lie and away he run!"

The sailors would have burned the thatch and pelted Skell as he ran from cover if Tros had let them, not that they knew anything about the facts, but they made common cause with the children on general principles.

Tros found Skell on a frame bed strung with deer-sinews before a good oak fire, at which an old woman was stirring a stew in an earthen pot. He had a cloak over him, and shivered as if he were suffering from ague, but he sat up when Tros entered, offered Tros a stool and threw off his fit of depression along with the cloak.

He was still wearing the dagger, as Tros noticed, and he touched it, which was not good manners; but he sent the old woman for mead and two beakers, bidding her warm it at the fireside when it came, and he had the good sense to make no reference to the caterwauling and insulting song outside.

Tros kept an eye on the hag and on the mead beside the fire, for he knew Skell's reputation and yet did not wish to refuse to drink with him.

"I am ill," said Skell, "and I wish you would cry this bargain off that we have made between us. I am willing to do whatever you say, provided I *can* do it. Name me another tryst that I should keep instead."

But Tros had expected that.

"You are too late, Skell," he answered. "They have brought that galley up the river. Caswallon has claimed it, to hold it in trust until he shall decide the outcome of the wager."

"But I can not cross to Gaul. No ship will take me," Skell objected. "At this season of the year they lay up all the ships in mud berths. Now if you would let me take that galley, Caswallon might consent if you did, then perhaps I could get a crew together and——"

But Tros had thought of that, too. He interrupted:

"The galley is unfit for sea, Skell. She needs alterations and repairs, which I will make in good time. But I know a man who will take you to Gaul. He is Hiram-ben-Ahab the Phœnician, whose ship sails soon."

And then, with both eyes on the hag who warmed the mead, for he knew Skell could not spring at him to use the dagger without the string bed squeaking a warning, he baited a trap into which he felt sure Skell must walk.

"I have a plan, Skell, to make it easy for you to get my father out of Gaul. There is a river called the Seine that flows northwestward into the Channel between Gaul and Britain, reaching the sea a good long journey to the westward of Caritia.*

"I will take a ship, and there, in the mouth of that river, I will wait for you, so you can deliver my father alive to me without much difficulty, making your way across country in the night-time until you reach the river mouth."

"But how shall I find your ship?" asked Skell.

The mead was warm enough, and would be too warm in a minute, so he signed to the hag to pour it. Tros took the beaker that was farthest from him and held it while the hag poured, withdrawing it suddenly before it was full so that the hag spilled quite a little, after which he watched Skell's face in the firelight.

Skell said the lip of the other beaker was dirty and bade the hag go and wash it, then went on talking in a hurry.

"How shall I find your ship?" he repeated. There was a thin smile somewhere in the midst of his foxy beard. "You will be in hiding, I suppose?"

"Among the reeds and with my mast down, yes," Tros answered. "But ashore, near where I hide, I will set up a cairn of white stones, and if you shout my name three times from there, I will come for you."

Skell's eyes betrayed that he was tempted by the bait, but Tros proposed to tempt a bigger fox than Skell. The man he wanted out of winter camp was Cæsar, the restless aspirant for fame who spent all winter editing a secretary's summer notes.

"I said I would make it easy for you, Skell. Now listen: I have Cæsar's memoranda and his seal, to recover which, Cæsar would set *all* his prisoners free, to say nothing of my father. I, on the other hand, value my father higher than Cæsar's secret papers, although I have read some of them and there are documents that I daresay Cæsar would be glad to have. What if I should bury that box of documents and seals under the cairn of white stones? Knowing that was there, would you not find it easier then to bargain for my father's freedom?"

"How do I know you would do that?" Skell demanded, trying to look indifferent, but his eyes betrayed him.

"I must trust you, and you must trust me, Skell."

"Yes, we must more or less trust each other."

Tros played his favorite trick then, of raw, cold frankness:

"You see, Skell, I do not pretend to like you. You are a man who did me an ill-service. I am compelling you to pay the price for that, and I do not think you like me any better than I like you.

"I am offering to help you carry out your bargain, because I know that you are not to be trusted otherwise. For my part, you shall have the seal and documents, and the galley, if you deliver my father alive into my hands at the mouth of the Seine within a month from now."

Skell stroked his red beard. He could hear the singing outside, as the fox hears hounds in the covert.

"All right," he said. "Cæsar knows me. He will listen. But I must have money for my expenses."

But again, Tros was not to be caught. He hoped it was true that Skell needed money.

"I will settle with the Phœnician for your passage to Caritia," he answered. "Nothing more than that."

"Then I must have a pledge from you

* Calais.

that you will really wait for me at Seine-mouth."

"My father is in Cæsar's hands," Tros answered. "I could not give a more compelling pledge."

"Nevertheless, as you said just now, you and I are not friends. Something of value is needed, to make your word good to me," Skell objected.

The glint of avarice was in his eyes, and a vague look, as if he were hopeful still of finding an excuse to back out. But Tros laughed, kicking his sword-point to the rear and drawing the blade six inches.

"Very well," he said. "You shall have this sword, the best sword in the world, a sword that once was Philip of Macedon's. You shall have it through the middle of your heart, Skell, if you fail to deliver my father at Seine-mouth and I ever set eyes on you again! Is that a pledge you value? Would you like to test it? If so, arm yourself and come outside!"

"I can not fight. I have the ague," Skell answered. "When does the Phœnician sail?"

"In a few days. If you go aboard his ship tonight, or tomorrow night, you will be rid of all this annoyance."

Tros jerked his head toward the door, against which clods of earth were thumping.

"They are likely to burn your thatch if you delay," he added. "Shall I tell the Phœnician to send his seamen for your baggage?"

Skell agreed, with a mean, exasperated glare in his eyes, scratching his teeth with his thumb nail, grinning as Tros turned his back to go. But Tros turned again suddenly, because of that dagger and its possibilities, and caught the grin before Skell could cover it, which put him in a marvelous good humor, because he was sure then that Skell was contemplating exactly such treachery as would fit in with his own plans.

So as he left the house he caught a clod of earth intended for Skell's door and pelted one of the children with it. Then, because that frightened some of them—since they knew Tros was Caswallon's friend—he found a lump of chalk and drew a caricature of Skell, beard, mustache and all, on the oaken door and left them pelting rocks, earth, acorns and all manner of dirt at that.

LATER, on the grass before Caswallon's porch, he paid the seamen and, as their eyes glinted at the gold coin, he made them a proposal:

"Ye have found me a hard captain but a profitable man to serve. If ye had served me with less knife throwing and with more good will, ye should have had the double of all that money."

He picked up handfuls of gold from one of Cæsar's bags and let the coins dribble through his fingers.

"What now if I promise you two for one of what you have received, for one more short voyage before winter sets in? Think of it! Money enough to buy a farm apiece and to live the rest of your lives ashore like gentlemen!"

They agreed, for never sailor lived who did not covet a farm, until he had one. But Caswallon laughed.

"Buy farms? They will buy drink and the caresses of the womenfolk who gut fish by Ludgate wharf!"

"Maybe," Tros answered. "They are no doubt better at that than at seamanship. But they don't spew their victuals overside whenever a ship rolls, and I shall need them when some of your peak-capped cockerels are lying belly upward on that galley's deck praying to the mast and sky to stand still!"

"You will find my cockerels crave money too!" Caswallon answered.

"For a venture against Cæsar?"

"Oh! No, perhaps not, not, that is, if Cæsar can be made to foot the reckoning!"

CHAPTER VI

HIRAM-BEN-AHAB STIPULATES

TROS sat by the hearth in Caswallon's hall, staring with leonine eyes at the fire, reading pictures in it. Caswallon sat beside Fflur, his long legs stretched toward the blaze, his skin, where it showed at neck and breast, looking whiter than ever because the firelight threw it into contrast with the fading blue designs that were drawn on it with wood.

Three hounds slept on the warm tiles. Red apples simmered in the warming mead. Orwic faced the fire with knees clasped in his hands and his back against an upset table.

A dozen men snored on the benches that

lined three walls. Wind whined under the eaves, rattling the shutters, and now and then a gust of smoke was blown down chimney, followed by soot and enough rain drops to make a splutter.

"Of what are you thinking?" asked Fflur.

She had been watching Tros, marveling at his strength and at his brow under the black hair, that was as splendid as the carving of an ancient king's.

"Of Skell, of Cæsar, of you," Tros answered.

"What of Skell? You named him first."

"He will go to Cæsar, saying that I, Tros, son of Perseus, am the man who wrecked that fleet off the shore of Kent. That I, Tros, have bribed him with the promise of Cæsar's own galley, that I took that night, to go to Cæsar and make terms for my father's freedom.

"That I, Tros, will be waiting at Seine-mouth for my father to be delivered to me, having with me Cæsar's own seal and Cæsar's chest containing all his private memoranda.

"He will say, 'Make haste! Set an ambush at Seine-mouth! Thus you will recover your seal and documents, and will have two prisoners instead of one—one of whom knows much about Caswallon and the Britons!' Thereafter, Skell will say, 'Reward me commensurately with the dignity and sense of justice of a Roman Imperator to whom important service has been done.' Thus Skell will speak to Cæsar."

"And Cæsar?" asked Fflur.

"He will listen, and smile. He will see through Skell as readily as *you* see through a serf who comes telling tales about the kitchen wenches. He will ask whether Skell has seen the seal and documents; and he will not be sure whether to believe Skell when that foxy-haired liar says yes.

"But Cæsar is a restless man, and by that time he will have grown tired of a woman, that being his habit; and maybe there will be no other woman there just then who pleases him. He likes them educated, entertaining. He grows difficult to please. He will bethink him that the Gauls along the coast might be caught brewing mischief if he should pay them an unexpected visit, for he knows the Gauls squirm under his heel. It will occur to him that life in camp is stupid, more particularly to a man of scholarly mind who has lost his secretary's notes!

"And he will remember that among those notes are some that would be very dangerous to him, if they should happen to reach Rome or fall into the hands of one of his own lieutenants, who might have brains enough to use them! So he will not dare to send a subordinate to Seine-mouth; he will go in person, with a cohort or perhaps two cohorts of cavalry, moving secretly and very swiftly, as his habit is. At Seine-mouth he will lie in wait for me."

"And me?" asked Fflur.

"Skell will tell Cæsar of you. To suck himself into Cæsar's good grace, he will fill Cæsar's mind so full of you that Cæsar will never rest until he shall have made you prisoner. And that is why I need Orwic and as many other young blades as will endure the sea a while and pledge themselves to obey me. If my good fortune holds, Fflur shall have Cæsar and hold him to ransom!"

"By Lud of Lunden, nay!" Caswallon swore. "If Cæsar again sets foot in Britain, he shall die here! I will give him his choice of weapons, and he shall fight me, without armor, before all my men."

"He will choose scent bottles and powder puffs!" said Orwic, glancing at Cæsar's neat little case of cosmetics that Tros had bestowed on Fflur. "I like this venture against Cæsar, though I hate the sea. Say more about it."

"Is not all said, except what the gods shall say to it?" Tros answered. "We have the galley. We must fit her like a well found Roman warship straight from Ostia with a dispatch for Cæsar from the Roman Senate. The dispatch, you understand, calls for delivery of my father, Perseus Prince of Samothrace, who is to be taken to Rome for trial on charges of conspiracy against the Senate and the Roman People, which is how all those robbers refer to themselves.

"First we set Skell ashore; and he talks. When we return, Cæsar will not be there, because he will have gone to wait for me at Seine-mouth, hoping to catch me. I, commander of the bireme, deliver the dispatch by Hiram-ben-Ahab the Phœnician and will not wait, but order it to be opened by whoever is in command in Caritia, declaring I am in great haste to return to Rome because of winter storms."

"If I were a Roman in Caritia," said

Orwic, "I would ask why you had not delivered that demand for Perseus when you came the first time. The Romans will think it strange that you should return with a message which you might just as easily have sent ashore with Skell."

"You don't know the Romans," Tros answered. "In the first place, they will never dream that one of their biremes might fall into the hands of an enemy who could use it. They think Cæsar's galley was sunk when his fleet was destroyed off Kent.

"In the second place, Hiram-ben-Ahab shall say the omens were unfavorable when I came the first time. Romans are mad on the subject of omens. Furthermore, Hiram-ben-Ahab shall say that I did not, nor do I, care to bring my crew too near the shore, for fear of desertions, they having grown discontented because of contrary winds, much labor at the oars and scurvy.

"Omens, tides, contrary winds, scurvy, they know those well! That list will satisfy their curiosity!"

"It wouldn't mine!" said Orwic. "But perhaps we Britons are less stupid than the Romans. Lud knows, they were stupid enough in the fighting in Kent. They won the first battle by being too stupid to know they were beaten! What if their liburnians, as you call them, should come out to investigate you?"

TROS, who was an opportunist first and last and liked to fit his plans to each emergency as it arose, began to wish he had worked out the details thoroughly before taking Britons into his confidence. They were good friends, and generous enthusiasts, but so full of their own superiority to foreigners of any kind that a man needed all his wit to manage them.

Orwic began suggesting wild plans of his own, that included loading horses on the galley, sailing to Caritia and setting fire to Cæsar's camp.

"And if we do that at night, we can ride 'em down in darkness as they run downwind in a panic!"

"I have it!" Tros slapped his thigh so suddenly he woke the dogs. "The first time Hiram-ben-Ahab puts in to Caritia, he lands Skell and says I wait off-shore because I suspect my crew of sickening with small-pox!

"My name for the occasion, let us say, is Caius Marius Poseidonius. The Phœnician shows an order signed by Caius Marius Poseidonius, commander of the bireme, authorizing him to land Skell in Caritia. And he, also, prefers not to stay in port because his men who visited my galley may have caught the sickness."

"Good!" Caswallon nodded. "That should satisfy them. The worst plague *we* ever had was caught from a ship. We burned the ship and slew the crew, kindly and with dignity. The druids saw to that; but the sickness spread all over Britain, because the Iceni carried it north on their way home from selling horses. The Romans will want none of that stuff!"

"And Cæsar," said Tros, "will have another good excuse to leave Caritia! He is afraid of small-pox. He will think Hiram-ben-Ahab may have brought it into port. He will certainly go that same night, very likely throwing Skell into a pest-house under observation of the surgeons, who will set fire to the hut and say it was an accident. Cæsar will go that very day to Seine-mouth to investigate Skell's story."

Fflur nodded, and nodded, and nodded, her gray eyes watching Tros. Caswallon held a finger up for silence; he knew that mood of hers. But all she said was—

"You are right now, Tros."

"And when I appear the second time," said Tros, "Hiram-ben-Ahab shall say I have seen Cæsar at a place along the coast. He shall add, it is true about small pox. They will understand that Cæsar wishes to kill my father Perseus without risk of being blamed for it. They will put him aboard Hiram-ben-Ahab's ship and order Hiram-ben-Ahab out of harbor with all speed."

"If the druids had more sense and less sanctity," said Orwic, "they might visit some real small pox on the Romans! Why can't they do an honest day's work against Britain's enemies, instead of pulling long faces at the sunrise? I believe in results. By Lud's ill-smelling mud," he went on impiously, "I'd sooner sail with Tros, vomit or not, than be blessed by all the druids between here and Mona*."

"Don't blaspheme the druids!" Tros retorted. "As for me, I would rather have their blessing than all Cæsar's gold."

"Well, you have both, you have both!" said Orwic pleasantly. "The druids like

* Anglesea, a very sacred place.

you and the gold rings genuine. What have *you* to worry about?"

"This," Tros answered. "That a number of you young horse-performers—" Caswallon and Orwic laughed delightedly at that—"must be on that galley and obedient to me! That is worry enough! Everything aboard a ship is just so, with one man giving orders and the rest obeying, or the ship sinks."

"What of it?" Orwic asked.

Caswallon held a finger up again for silence. Fflur's eyes were looking dreamy. A great gust of wind blew down the chimney, sending a cloud of smoke into the room. The wind howled, and a log fell suddenly sending up an explosion of sparks. Fflur's voice, when she spoke at last, was far-away and colorless, pitched in a middle monotone.

"Whatever you do, or whatever you do not, Cæsar will come again, but not yet. He will cross the Thames; but I see Lunden standing after Cæsar has gone, taking many with him—prisoners, hostages, slaves, women.

"Do what you will, you can not prevent Cæsar from coming. Do what *he* will, he can not win Britain, although Gaul is his, and so are the lands of the Belgæ. Tros shall injure him, but not much, and again a little, and that time more severely, only to befriend him in the end.

"Tros shall do Cæsar a service that neither he nor Cæsar will value at the moment; but it will place the world at Cæsar's feet, and kill him before he can grasp it. Then war, war everywhere! And Tros in the midst of it. Tros and a woman, whom he shall serve to her own undoing!"

SHE ceased, coughing in the sharp smoke, and Caswallon sent a serf outside to climb on the roof and fix a slab of wood against the chimney top. When that was done he drank heavily of mead with apples in it, and, wiping his mouth on his sleeve, pronounced judgment.

"I never knew Fflur wrong when she is in that mood. So I think it is a good thing to launch this venture against Cæsar, because Tros, she says, shall injure him. What of the Phœnician? Is he willing?"

Tros admitted with a gruff laugh that the Phœnician had not yet given his consent.

"But I have gone the right way to persuade him. I have promised him my help to get him past the Romans on his way home, whether he helps me or not. He will do more in that way, than if I bargained with him."

At which Caswallon roared with laughter.

"Try that trick on the Iceni!" he shouted. "Eh, Orwic? Let him try to buy a horse or two on such terms! Lud! Oh, Lud of Lunden Town! Hey there! Send for the Phœnician!"

He threw a lump of wood at one of the sleepers on the benches and sent him to bring Hiram-ben-Ahab "shawls and all."

"Bring him in a basket if he won't walk!"

Tros urged that the Phœnician was a brave old sailor who should be treated with the courtesy due to a blood relation. But that was because he and Hiram-ben-Ahab were members of the same secret fraternity, although of different chapters of it.

"I know these blood relations!" said Caswallon. "Aye, he is a very bloody one. Eh, Fflur? Eh, Orwic? He underpaid us for the tin and overcharged us for the dyes! He has lived at our expense, and his crew have robbed our townsmen, mending boats that the lazy rascals should have mended for themselves, demanding twice what the work is worth, and saving money for their master, who pays them nothing while they are in port! Drunken, knife-throwing thieves! What's worse, there will be a lot of little half-Phœnician bastards for us to try to make good Britons of!"

However, he was courteous when the old Phœnician came, coughing and shivering in his camel-hair shawls. He had a great chair set for him before the fire and woke up the dogs to make room for him, offering him warm mead, saying that Fflur knew how to cure all kinds of coughs.

"Only, she will purge you like the ——," he added reminiscently. "The last time she cured me of a headache I had belly burning for a week."

"She's better than the druids, though," said Orwic. "Druids put you on rations of dry bread and carrots, and make you drink water like a horse. When you're properly famished they preach about your latter end and being born again into another body, until you feel like burning all the undesirables, so that it won't be into one of their bodies anyhow! I'd rather be purged by Fflur than preached at by a druid."

"None can cure me," Hiram-ben-Ahab answered, coughing. "This is my last journey."

"Hah!" remarked Caswallon. "Then make it one to be remembered! On a man's last journey he should play a man's part."

The old Phœnician glanced from face to face, his fingers twitching nervously.

"You will reach home," Fflur assured him.

Hiram-ben-Ahab coughed, perhaps to hide a grin, or so at least Tros thought.

"If I knew surely I should reach home, I would put into no port on the way," he answered.

"Fflur is always right!" Caswallon retorted, almost angrily. "So it is certain you will reach home. Therefore you can afford to do your friends a service on the way."

"I have done you many services," said the Phœnician. "I taught your women how to use the dye so that it would not wash out. I taught your sailors how to make boats water tight; how to make a proper rope by twisting seven sets of linen strands; how to bind the edges of a sail, and how to cut the sail so that it will catch more wind. What more do you want of me?"

"No more than you shall do!" Caswallon answered, laying a great blue-and-white fist on his knee and leaning forward. "You wish to go before the winter storms. But unless you will do what I propose, you shall not sail until spring comes!"

The Phœnician coughed, perhaps to hide embarrassment, but it racked his frame for all that.

"What could you profit by keeping me here all winter?" he asked.

"I am thinking of *you*," Caswallon answered. "If you will do what I wish, I will send an escort with you, a great bireme, as far as the end of the coast of Gaul to protect you against Romans and Northmen and pirates. But if not, then I could not spare the escort. And I should be a mean host to let you go away alone before the spring in that case. There might be fewer pirates in the spring, and fewer storms and possibly no Romans. Name a price if you will; but you shall do what I demand."

"There is nothing I could ask," said the Phœnician, "except, perhaps, a pair of pretty slave girls for the court of Ptolemy."

But he knew Caswallon would not grant that favor, because he had tried before and Fflur had vetoed it.

"I have sold you three rowers," said Caswallon. "I will give you back the price of them, if that will satisfy you."

Hiram-ben-Ahab coughed again, and spat into the fire. The expression of his face might have been due to physical agony, but Tros thought not.

"I am a trader," he said at last, and his words were arresting because he spoke slowly in a foreign accent, with harsh gutturals and none of the soft, swift, liquid sounds the Britons used.

"I fill a ship. I buy men or I hire them, and I drive them to the world's end. Some die; some live; all suffer. I trade and fill my ship again and go home, I suffering more than any, because it is my ship, my risk. You understand me?

"Sickness, mutiny, Romans, pirates, rocks, tides, quicksands, storms, all these and more I struggle with, day and night, day and night, month after month. Ever I swear each journey is the last. Ever I set forth again, because two spirits in me urge. One beckons and the other drives.

"Trade I must, because I am a trader and I itch for trade. Adventure I must have, because I am adventurer; it is in my blood, my bones, my dreams. It frets me when I count the profits of a journey and men say to me, 'Hiram-ben-Ahab, you are rich at last. Go not again. Remember the pot that went too often to the well!'

"And yet I go again, because I love adventure and I love trade, being wedded to them as to two wives, each of whom is jealous of the other and I striving to serve both equally, giving each her turn, yet living, as it were, in one house with the two."

THE howling wind blew away the board from the chimney top, sending it clattering along the roof. A great cloud of smoke filled the room and the old Phœnician coughed until it seemed as if his lungs must burst under the strain.

Caswallon scolded the serf and sent him to fix the board in place again, threatening to make him stand and hold it there all night unless he should fasten it properly. Then when the smoke had thinned a little and they had thrown fresh oak knots on the fire, Hiram-ben-Ahab cleared his throat with warm mead and, biting at an apple, went on talking:

"Trade and adventure, two jealous wives, helping, hindering each other! Hey-hey! I have been a good husband to both of them

—*keh-keh-keh!*—and I am old. A too good husband ages sooner than a bad one!

"Trade and adventure; the same and not the same! For when I trade—" he thrust in two hands forward, palms upward, and moved the fingers in a "hither! come ye hither!" gesture— "I look to profit. That wife is a thrifty one you understand me? Eh? *Keh-keh-keh-ka-a-gh*—these fogs! These fogs!

"And when I go adventuring—*eh-h-h*, but I have seen strange sights in *my* day: Mountains of ice in the sea, and whales around them, and the big fish warring with the whales until the sea was blood-red, land where you could see the sun at midnight, where fir trees taller than British elms came to the sea's edge and the men wore bearskin and ate fish, black stone that burns—"

"*We* have that," said Caswallon. "Our fishermen bring it from the country north of the Iceni. We have burned it on this hearth."

"Have you seen fish fly?" asked the Phœnician.

"No," said Caswallon, "but I have listened to a lot of lies in my day."

"Oh, well. When I go adventuring, it is for love of the adventure. That wife is a mistress, teases, coaxes, is extravagant—" He threw his hands outward, and smiled as if he were pouring a fortune into a woman's lap, a lovely, lucky woman to be wooed by that tough old master of experience—"but I never forget that I have *two* wives!

"I have carried the stone that burns, all the way from an island where it snows at midsummer and the sun shines at midnight* to Alexandria, where I sold it to King Ptolemy the Piper† for its weight in corn, which I took to Ostia in four ships and sold to the Romans for silver! *Hey-yey!*

"And Ptolemy burned the black stone all in one night, when he was drunk, to entertain a Roman moneylender; made a circle of it in the execution place and burned I don't know how many convicted criminals, throwing in more and more until the fire was finished. But he would have killed them anyhow, so that is not on *my* head. Let Ptolemy answer for that.

"Of all the men who set sail with me on my first voyage—I was younger than Tros then; that is fifty years ago—not one man lives but I. Storms, sickness, strife: I have enough to answer for."

"You haven't answered *me*," said Caswallon firmly. "Tros spoke to you of what I require. Will you do it, or no?"

Hiram-ben-Ahab took a drink of mead. Then he looked at Fflur a long time. Then he met Caswallon's eyes.

"If it is for Tros and for his father Perseus, I will do it gladly and for nothing," he said, drawing up his legs and folding them under him, as if he were sitting on his own poop. "But if it is for you, you pay."

Fflur nodded. She understood him perfectly, but Caswallon looked piqued and Orwic swore under his breath.

"Have I not been your good host?" Caswallon asked.

"Aye, and I have been your good guest. As to that there is no account awaiting settlement. But Tros, who might have made a bargain, and a hard one—for I will need that permit he can sign with Cæsar's seal—Tros chose to make none, but promised, as a young man to an old one——"

Caswallon stood up suddenly. He was a giant, and he looked like the god of battles when he tossed his head to throw back the long, fair hair.

"By the Blood of Lud!" he thundered, "I am not behind Tros in this my kingdom! Take what you will! Help yourself to anything your old eyes covet, and go free. For I think as you say, this is to be your last journey. I ask nothing of you."

"Then I must do the best I can," said the Phœnician, sipping at the mead again and glancing at Tros slyly. "*Hey-yey!* When a man has two wives, it is not always the thrifty one whose counsel guides him."

LATER, when the men-at-arms were very fast asleep, Caswallon went and fetched a druid, who had lived in Gaul and learned great skill with the pen. Then they brought out Cæsar's chest, and after much confabulation between Tros and Hiram-ben-Ahab the druid copied Roman documents on parchment, making changes at Tros' dictation, and forging Cæsar's signature so perfectly that not even Fflur's keen eyes could tell the difference when she compared copy and original.

At last, with a great laugh of contentment, Tros affixed Cæsar's seal, and went out with his arm around the shivering Phœnician, to greet the golden dawn.

*Spitzbergen?
†Father of Cleopatra.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH THE WOMEN LEND A HAND.

THE Britons called it fun, until the third, or maybe the fourth day, when even Orwic tired of it. The women had enough to do to copy Roman costumes, and all the blacksmiths on the countryside were set to making Roman shields and swords in imitation of those captured on the Kentish beach.

The helmets were the greatest difficulty, until they found a way of imitating them with basketwork, at which Britons were experts. They stretched skin over that, and painted it, making plumes of horse hair.

Conops had a hard time keeping the Britons from making their own improvements. They wanted to make the plumes three times the size, and to lengthen the swords, and to paint the shields blue because that was the color that always brought them luck.

Tros saw to the galley, which needed such an overhaul as was next to impossible to make in haste in that undisciplined community. They had a Celtic kind of individuality, that fused them into one mercurial mass in opposition to authority, but made them units in deciding what to do or when to do it.

When all other excuses for not working had been tried, they discovered that the day was sacred to some god or other and decamped to the woods to listen to a sermon from the druids.

So the druids had to be won over, and Tros did that by letting them into the secret that he hoped to capture Cæsar—enemy of their religion. Their forest dwellings were a-hum with fugitives from Gaul, who had brought details of the tortures Cæsar used in his efforts to learn druidic secrets.

So the druids came down in procession from forest to waterside and blessed the bireme, with dew and earth and mistletoe, proclaiming the ship sacred and whoever should lend a hand to recondition her, or whoever should sail in her under Tros' command, thrice blessed.

"You'll find we'll have to fight for what we want though!" Orwic commented.

The galley had been built in Gaul, from a Roman model but by unaccustomed shipwrights, and in haste, because Cæsar did everything in half the time that other people liked to squander. So, to a practised eye, she would have been an obvious fraud if she had appeared off Caritia pretending to have come from a Roman port through the Gates of Hercules.

She was too small, too clumsily built, and under-sparred. It called for a very great deal of crafty reconstruction to make up for the lack of size, and, even so, pitch and linen-covered wickerwork had to masquerade in many instances as heavy timber, not that timber was lacking, but time. And the Britons were nimble with their favorite withes.

Tros built a whole new bow and stern of wickerwork on light oak frames, and covered that with painted cloth to make the ship look larger, praying to all the gods he had ever heard of, and they were many, not to send even such a half-gale as should break it all away.

In all that he was ably helped by Hiram-ben-Ahab, who had sent his own tight ship down river, with Skell on board, to lie up in a creek and wait for him. Thus they lost the services of the Phœnician's crew, but prevented Skell from seeing the galley or learning of what was taking place.

They mended the great arrow engines, and crammed the baskets full of new-made arrows nearly a yard long, Tros stowing those below deck to keep the Britons from firing them at marks across the river—they claiming they must have practise; he swearing he would have ammunition. They filled the water casks. That was a prodigious business, because the Britons swore that any sort of water was a miserable substitute for mead; but Tros made them clean the casks with charcoal and then haul water from a dozen miles away, having seen too many crews die of the stuff they put into ships from 'longshore wells. And by that time the Britons voted him a despot, although, and perhaps because, he had only used up ten days for the entire business.

But it was not until the ship was ready and the crew had to be broken in that his real trouble began.

Fflur, Caswallon and Orwic had chosen a hundred of the brassiest young coxcombs Britain could produce, most of them had ridden into the waves in the teeth of Cæsar's legions and had slain their Romans, hand-to-hand; but were chosen chiefly for their horsemanship. That was not so foolish as at first appeared, because the men with the highest courage and the strongest sense of

manhood took the trouble to excel at that. But they were coxcombs.

Orwic himself would have challenged Tros a hundred times if the other ninety-nine had not been so continually challenging him that he had to stand by the commander to uphold his own lieutenancy.

Their theory was that they should stand around the deck in imitation Roman armor and look handsome until they came in sight of Gaul, when they would land by some unexplained stratagem by night and rape the lair of Cæsar.

The twenty paid seamen who had brought the galley up the Thames with Tros, and perhaps a few more pressed for the occasion, were to do the work; and they were perfectly willing to help Tros lick those seamen into absolute obedience.

Tros stood on the poop with arms akimbo and laughed gaily at them, because if he had shown his real feelings there would have been no chance that he could handle them at all.

"Why not have *me* do all the work, and you all be the captains?" he suggested amiably.

He bulked big in a Roman's armor that the blacksmiths had enlarged to fit him, and he wore his own long sword as well as a short Roman one, which made him look dangerous. An imitation Roman helmet—none of the captured ones was big enough—cocked at a bit of an angle suggested an indifference to consequences. The toga thrown back over his shoulder gave him dignity.

And there were always those leonine eyes, that a man could not see without knowing there was a volcano not exactly slumbering behind them, but under control until needed.

"You!"

He singled out the most opinionated of them all, a youth of twenty, whose wife had painted new blue pictures on his white skin, and whose mustache was like a fox's, about ten reddish hairs on either side.

"Come up here on the poop and show me how to set that sail! Stand by, the rest of you, to take his orders!"

The coxcomb had the good sense to refuse, but that did not save himself from being laughed at, and when the laugh had died and they had all done imitating what they thought were deep-sea orders—such as they had heard along the river-bank when the fisher-crews put out for herring in the North Sea—Tros dealt out information. He was growing very fluent in the Gaulish dialect they used.

"Ye know the feel of a horse's backbone, when ye ride ten leagues without a saddle. Ye know soreness of the hams and how the spine can tremble like a stick with a weight of pain atop. Those are beginnings. I deal now in middle matters. And the end is not yet.

"Ye shall learn now what hard corns feel like on the hams; and how red hot the blisters grow on hands that have pulled on an oar a day or two! Ache? Ye have never ached as ye shall before this journey ends!

"Ye need now spines like oak trees, sinews like new ropes, belly muscles like a bear's! Ye need guts such as go into a wild boar's constitution, and a lot more courage than ye showed there on the beach when ye stood off Cæsar's men!

"I saw that fight. I watched it from this poop. I saw each turn of it, and perceived how Cæsar won. That day, ye fought by fits and starts. Ye charged into the sea, and out again to let the rear ranks have a turn, resting yourselves behind the fighting line, to come at it again; whereas Cæsar's men stuck to it until they won the beach.

"And now ye are trigged like Romans, ye must do as Romans! There is no pausing between encounters with the wind and sea! The tides don't cease because your hams smart with the salt in open blisters! Ye may cry, but the storm shrieks louder, and the only answer to the storm is work!

"Ye can get off your horses and walk home if your buttocks are on fire and your shoulders feel like a sack of wheat on a knitting needle. Not so at sea! Ye must sit and row until the oar-handle bucks back and lifts you by the chin, and the oar end of the man behind you takes you in the shoulder blades.

"With the ship rolling and the wind howling and the water squirting through the oar port, ye must keep on rowing, while the blisters burn and your bones ache as if chariots had driven over them! This sea game is a calling that needs guts!

"So I will think no worse of any man who cries off now. I will cry good bed to him and good mead and a fireside! I need the daring men on this adventure, the bold spirits who would rather die than quit, the men who can endure pain and the cold and vomiting, and still row until I bid them

cease! Ashore then now, every man who thinks himself unfit for this adventure!"

THEY howled at him to show them something he could do and they could not, mocking the sea and all its tantrums, as any young cockerel can who hasn't tried it and who has a quart or two of *curmi* or some other potent liquor under his sword belt. So he changed his strategy then and promised, by the great North Light that never failed a mariner, that he would leave behind whoever should disobey one order or shirk one trick of training before the start.

"Ye have stood up to the big bear and the lean wolf and the gray boar. But I will make you fit to face the sea! May the Gods, who laugh, forgive me!" he added in an undertone to the old Phœnician. "Can a man turn Britons into mariners?"

Caswallon kept away.

"They will appeal to me and I might have to side with them," he said when Tros invited him to come and watch proceedings.

But he took care to learn how Tros had handled them, and laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks.

For one of the things that Tros did was to moor the galley by the stern to the oak pile in mid-river, and to set those free and fearless horsemen rowing against that, with the paid seamen placed at intervals along the benches to set the pace and show them an example. And that, as Orwic swore, was no amusement for a British gentleman.

For a while they made sport of it, trying to break the warp or else the oaken pile, but all they succeeded in doing was to stir up Thames mud until the stink offended them, and to crack one another in the back with oar ends until hot words led to fighting, and Tros had to get down among them with a mop to swab their indignant faces and get them all laughing again.

Conops' services were lost then, when most needed. He was used to teaching men to row. He could have run along the plank beside the benches, singling out this man and that, showing exactly how to hold an oar and how to throw the head back when the blade struck water.

But word came up-river, brought by Hiram-ben-Ahab's second mate in a small boat, that Skell was growing restless and threatening to leave the Phœnician's ship unless something happened before nightfall. So Conops had to be sent back with him to manage Skell. Tros' parting words were careful.

"Understand me—he mustn't be tied. He mustn't think he is a prisoner, or he may see through the whole trick. Also, I want him alive and fit for treachery in Gaul! So, first, try lying to him. Say, Hiram-ben-Ahab will come tomorrow, then the next day, and so on. When that fails, pick a quarrel with him.

"He will call you a liar, no doubt. Be offended by that and lay him out with a belaying pin or with your knife hilt. But mind, no overdoing it! A sore head may stir the venom in him, which I need. But a knife wound might let the impudence out, and he will need all his impudence this journey!"

Conops winked his only eye, bowed with a movement like a courtesy until his weather-stained blue kirtle nearly touched the deck, holding his right hand up, palm outward, and departed overside. He would have gone to Gaul, to try and kidnap Cæsar single handed, if Tros had ordered it.

Thereafter Tros was in a quandary, because the girls came down to the riverbank and crowded into boats, to laugh at the oarsmen's antics and at the oar blades spraddling this and that way like the legs of a drunken centipede.

They screamed idiotically when the galley lurched toward them, and asked, when it lurched away again, whether Tros had his crew chained by the foot, the way the Northmen chained slaves to the benches.

When Orwic leaned overside to order them away in his haughtiest manner, they called him "sailor-man Orwic" and asked how much a basket were the fish.

So the first day's practise at the oars broke up in rowdy repartee and ended by the girls all being chased home, screaming, Orwic vowing that women were the curse of the human race.

"That's one thing I concede the druids," he said scornfully. "They are born of women, like the rest of us, but they know enough to keep away from them when they once take vows. What puzzles me is, why a man can't do that without pulling a long face and singing hymns at sunrise. I was through with women long ago. They spoil everything."

BUT Tros went straight to a woman, Fflur by her fireside, where she knitted the first trousers of her youngest son and listened to the calf-love story of her eldest, who had seen a girl who suited him "by Verulam, where Merlin son of Merlin keeps the mill. Aye, Mother, Merlin's daughter."

When she had said her say concerning Merlin's daughter—and there was much she said that was pointed, but without a barb, and much more that was understood she might have said, had it not been better that Caswallon should say that for her—she listened to Tros, seeming to listen with those gray eyes rather than with her ears, which were hidden under the gray-shot golden hair.

And that night Fflur gave a party to the women, at which no men were present, although the men made bonfires all around the house and caterwauled and burned a witch in effigy, pretending they thought the women were conspiring to sell Lunden to the Romans and submit themselves to Roman husbands. They even made a Roman out of a pig's bladder and some meal bags, and pushed it through the window on a stick.

But what happened at that party did not leak out, because Fflur knew how secrets are told in such way that women keep them. The girls had a great air of importance when they let the men lead them home at last, but no amount of cajoling or teasing made them talk.

And next day, when most of his hundred—as Tros had expected they would—refused downrightly to return to rowing and be made ridiculous, the girls joined hands and danced around them, mocking them, singing a new song Fflur had set to an old tune. It was about the men of Lunden, who were such babies that they could only ride horseback and were afraid to hurt their lily-white hands by pulling at ash oars.

So the hundred went back to the rowing, because the girls declared they wouldn't kiss a man who hadn't blisters on his hands and couldn't make an ash oar keep time as it smote the water. In fact, there were more than a hundred who offered themselves in place of the mutineers, and several heads were broken as the original hundred defended their claim to be the first gentlemen rowers in all Britain, a kind of brand-new aristocracy with first claim on the admiration of the women.

Orwic had two girls in attendance on him when he sauntered back to duty. He contrived to look bored, but the appearance was unconvincing.

CHAPTER VIII

MUTINY AND MAL DE MER

THEN came, after a series of gales, one of those clear October nights when Britain is hushed, as if she heard the winter coming and were waiting in her bridal robes. The very animals were still. The river sucked by the wharf-piles with a hint of bell notes in the splash, and the stars shone as if wet with dew.

That was the night Tros started. He had sent Hiram-ben-Ahab down river in the afternoon, the rowboat keeping close inshore to avoid the incoming tide. There were no farewell feats or mead drinkings, because the old man protested he could not sit through another such ordeal.

Caswallon permitted him to vanish like a specter of the past, wrapped in his camel-hair shawls and seated in the stern of Fflur's swan-carved barge.

But twenty of the young girls kissed him first, lest Britain be disgraced, and hung three garlands around his neck, filling the boat so full of flowers that the rowers had hard work to take their seats.

And Tros would have no feasting because he wanted his crew sober. If they had sat down in Caswallon's hall to meat and mead there would have been no hope of getting them on board before morning.

But he could not keep Fflur and Caswallon off the ship, and although Caswallon, at Tros' request, gave out that the galley would leave on the following day, all Lunden was there, nevertheless, two hours after sunset, when the tide changed, and the girls so flocked around the ship in punts and rowboats that when Tros ordered the warp cast off and struck the first beat on the bull-hide drum to time the oarsmen, there were upsets, screams, girls in the river, and it needed Tros' voice, roaring louder than the drum, to keep the oars at work.

Even so, as the tide took hold of the galley, she almost buried her beak in the mud below the pool.

But Caswallon had brought along three druids to forfend ill luck. There was mistletoe at the mast head. The moon was just

exactly right, a crescent with the points so oriented as to gather fortune from the sky and pour it on the undertaking.

So nobody was drowned, as Orwic, leaning out from the fighting top at the mast head, where he was supposed to be conning the course, reported.

Orwic said he knew those reaches of the Thames. So Tros had sent him up there, chiefly to flatter him, but he sent a seaman up there too, and Caswallon made Orwic his admiral afterwards, he was so impressed by the way the ship was piloted in darkness.

They rowed downstream to drumbeat, towing Caswallon's barge, filling the night with throbbing until the ducks awoke and scuttered into deeper reed beds, until the singing of the girls by Lunden Pool grew faint and died away in a murmur, until mud appeared, as the tide receded, and Tros held the galley in mid river, not trusting even Orwic's skilled assistant to know short cuts in the gloom.

And at last they saw a dim light in the marshes, which was Hiram-ben-Ahab's riding light, and there Fflur, Caswallon and the druids were put overside to wait for the tide to change again and bear them back, upstream, to Lunden Town.

But first Caswallon made a speech to the gentlemen adventurers who leaned on the white-ash oars to listen, each man with an imitation Roman helmet, sword and armor under his rowing bench.

"Sons of good British mothers! Let none return to Britain less a man than he set forth! Into Tros' hands I have given you, and I have charged him he shall lead you nobly. Do ye obey him, whom I trust. I hold him answerable. If he brings you back with honor, I will honor him; and I think he will lead you craftily to great deeds, the which I would that I might share in.

"But I am the king, whose foot may not leave Britain, as ye know. Smite, each of you, a blow for me! For lo! I am a king who strikes at Cæsar with a hundred sword hands, with the cunning of a hundred brains. So be ye valiant!"

They did not cheer, lest Skell should hear them on the old Phœnician's ship. Caswallon, Fflur and the druids went overside into the lapping darkness and were rowed into the reeds to await the coming tide.

Then Tros called to Orwic to light a mast-head flare, and when that had burned for the space of a hundred heartbeats the pitch-dipped branch was cast into the river like a plunging meteor and Tros set the drumbeat going, low, slow, regular, muting the drum with his knee, lest Skell should catch the rhythm and add two and two together later on.

Then, when they had cleared the mouth of Medway and at dawn the river broadened out of view on either hand, he set the drum to thundering and made the oarsmen grunt and sweat until they felt the long swell under them and, as the tide was near the slack, an off-shore breeze awoke.

"This Lud of Lunden is a god with brains!" Tros shouted then. "Tide he gives us, and then a wind exactly in the quarter whence we need it!"

HE laughed when the hirelings manned the halyards and the wind filled the bellying sail, for he had those young cockerels at his mercy now! Soon he could hear Orwic's groan and vomit from the fighting top for the tide had turned against the wind.

There was lively motion in the dark, uplifting rollers and a drift of white scud splashing through the oar ports. Now was not much need to bid the rowing cease; good half of the oars were idle before the order came!

And as Tros leaned on the helm to make the utmost of the wind to gain an offing before he should turn, with tide abeam, southward along the coast of Kent, he chuckled—first at the silence in the ship's waist, then at the noise of resurrected mead and venison that gurgled overside or in between the benches, anywhere at all!

The twenty sea-wise hirelings, who had fought him all the way from Gaul to Lunden not so long ago, gave him no trouble at all on this adventure, since he had them, too, at disadvantage.

As surely as they were none too many to man the sheets and braces, they were all too few to offer disobedience, with a hundred of Caswallon's blooded cockerels, s e a s i c k though those were, at hand to put them in their place. The scorn was mutual and thorough.

The more sick the aristocracy became, the less they admired such human cattle as could thrive in a box on a heaving sea and, by the same compelling instinct, the less pleased it made them to be patronized.

One seaman, who dared to grin between decks when sent below to wedge a shifting water cask in place, was almost killed, which set Tros thinking.

He put a seaman at the helm and went below, discovering more than twenty oarsmen who were only sick enough to feel ill tempered, chilly and ashamed. He gathered them in the ship's waist, abaft the citadel.

"Choose!" he ordered gruffly. "Take mops and clean up all that mess of vomiting, or stand a watch on deck and let the seamen swab!"

They chose the deck, and Tros, in no hurry at all, since he must let the Phœnician overtake him after the next tide, spilled the wind out of the sail repeatedly until they learned the use of brace and sheet. There being no such cure for seasickness as work aboard a plunging ship, he quartered the sea in every possible direction to keep them busy at the ropes and to accustom them to every kind of belly-empty motion, until they grew new sea legs under them and were aware of appetite.

When they had eaten of the sacked dry venison and bread, such sleepiness came over them as only the sea produces, sleepiness of bone and brain and muscle, eyes, skin, all the senses, until an oak deck felt like a feather bed and any kind of windbreak was a haven of dreamless bliss.

So he let them sleep wherever they lay down to it, and the seamen had no watch and watch that night, but later, when the storm came, Tros had a score of proud men he could call on, half of them in either watch, not expert, but enthusiastic. Thus he was able to rest ten tired-out real seamen at a time.

And that worked wonders. For the aristocracy discovered they were not so far behind the seaman after all, stronger than they when only muscle counted, lacking only knowledge of what to do, and how to do it with the least exertion.

That led to rivalry, even to blows, until Orwic, green-cheeked, swaying and self-conscious, crawled down from the fighting top at last, compelled himself to eat, and took charge of his friends.

Then Tros rearranged the watches, keeping gentlemen and seamen to themselves, and matched one against the other. By the afternoon of the first day out the men who had lain groaning in the scuppers began appearing one by one on deck, and some of them added themselves to Orwic's watch, getting in one another's way, but learning rapidly.

So all went increasingly well until Tros hove the ship to in fine weather, the second day out from Lunden, with the Kentish cliffs in sight on one hand and the cliffs of Gaul just visible through a haze to southward.

Being hove to was another kind of motion. There were prompt defections from the ranks of Orwic's men. But Tros was more concerned about the blue haze masking the cliffs of Gaul and a change of weather in the northwest where a bank of gray cold-looking clouds, looked full of wind.

Watching that cloudbank and the line of white across the sea beneath it, his eye detected two specks that he liked still less, for they followed a third, which was certainly the three-reefed mainsail of Hiram-ben-Ahab's ship. He knew that Phœnician curved spar as he knew the cliffs of Samothrace, and, though he had only seen the spar and lug-sail of a Northman once, he did not need Orwic's voice from the fighting top to warn him that Hiram-ben-Ahab was running from a pair of North sea pirates.

The Britons began roaring for a battle on the deep, and even the seasick oarsmen crawled on deck, recovering their strength from sheer excitement, some of them demanding food, that they might gain strength for the fighting. But Tros stood scratching at his beard, perplexed.

The gods—and he was a whole-souled pantheist, who saw the hand of one god or another in every splash of spray and change of circumstances—were staging a conundrum for him that demanded wit.

He felt reasonably sure he could beat those Northmen off, for he knew his Britons and the dreadful havoc he could wreak with six great arrow engines. Too, if he could trust his oarsmen, by a deft maneuver he might wreck one Northman, catching her in a following sea—it was boiling white now under the racing clouds—and the following sea would swamp her as her slim bows crumpled on the galley's oak-and-iron ram, which would leave but one Northman to deal with, and six arrow engines for the work, one slim-waisted longship, that had run too long before the rising sea to dare to turn about.

He smiled at the nerve of the old Phœnician, who had dared to reef down snugly even though the Northmen gained on him and he had no fighting crew. He supposed old Hiram-ben-Ahab had counted on the sight of a Roman bireme to send the pirates scurrying for shelter, calculating speed and distance with the accuracy that a man learns in fifty years at sea.

But what if the Northmen did not know the bireme's possibilities? Had Rome ever sent a ship up their way? They might mistake her for some freakish foreign thing hove to and helpless, as she surely would be presently, unless he should go about in time. The storm would burst on him as the galley lay a-rolling with her yard braced nearly fore and aft.

TROS felt at the helm, watching all three ships, and there was hardly a mile between them, or more than three miles between them and himself. The Northmen seemed not far behind the old Phœnician in seamanship.

If he should fail to put the galley about before the thundering northwester hurled high seas on him—and it would be too late then—they would simply storm along past him and pursue the old Phœnician until they could close with him at their own discretion, perhaps in the lee of Ictis or wherever the wind and sea should offer opportunity.

But if he should go about in time, ahead of that tumbling sea, and run, he was afraid the Northmen might think he ran from them, and that involved a second problem: That his own Britons might believe the same and be mutinous.

Then, though he had improved her, the galley still steered like a house when a following sea lumped under her high stern. There was the risk, amounting almost to a certainty, that a high sea under that stern would break away the wicker false end he had erected at such pains to increase the ship's apparent size.

However, he went about, and squared away under three reefed mainsail before the storm struck him, boiling along beam to beam with Hiram-ben-Ahab three-quarters of a mile to starboard, and one of the Northmen half a mile astern. The other lurched and pitched on the Phœnician's quarter like a lean wolf keeping a stag in view.

Then Tros began to curse the day when Romans ever left dry land and built themselves floating islands that they fondly thought were ships! Hiram-ben-Ahab's sweet-lined little merchant ship, with her great eye painted in the bow, deep-laden though she was, sailed faster than he could follow without spreading more sail than he dared.

The Northmen raced along like hungry fish, their beautifully molded bows preventing them from plunging. It was going to be a hopeless stern chase, with all the ever-widening Channel in which to scatter, and small hope of coming to the Phœnician's aid in time.

Tros made his mind up swiftly when he realized that, for the waves were thundering under his stern and loosening the wicker dummy work with every plunge. Already the cloth covering was washed away and there was nothing to be gained by maneuvering to save what seemed already doomed.

He changed his helm and ordered two reefs shaken out, turned the reeling galley's broadside almost square to the waves and bore down on the nearest Northman.

It was then that he cursed himself for letting Conops go with the Phœnician. There was no one he could trust to rush below and make sure of the closing of the oarports; no one to stand below the poop and enforce his orders on the instant that he roared them; no one to see that the arrow baskets did not lurch overside while the Britons wrestled with one another for the right to serve the engines; no one to see that the gut was sheltered from the spray.

Some fool loosed the dolphin from its lashings and the great iron horror began swinging from the yardarm like Fate's pendulum, threatening to chafe its halyard and go crashing through the deck, striking the shrouds when the ship lurched, swinging the yard and spilling wind out of the sail.

Nor had he a seaman fit to send aloft to throw a rope around the thing and make it fast. He *had* to let the helm go then. He gave it to Orwic, jumped to the main deck and up on to the citadel. Thence he sprang into the shrouds with drawn sword, slashing at the halyard as it swung, and the dolphin grazed the ship's side as it plunged through the crest of a wave, forever harmless.

Orwic, laughing happily when Tros took the helm again, cuffed another Briton away from one of the poop arrow engines. He

had feared he might miss something by having to stand there hauling at a steering oar, and in another minute he would have let the helm go anyhow.

The heads of the Northmen showed plainly now between the shields erected all along the longship's bulwark, and Orwic began laying arrows in the grooves, while half a dozen young enthusiasts got in one another's way to turn the crank and strain the bows taut.

But it was the bow engines that fired first, ignoring the galley's roll and shoulder plunge, that were increased by the weight of the fighting top, where no man could have clung and kept his senses.

One volley of arrows plunked into the sea like a flight of hurrying fish, three waves away. The other went rocketing so high over the Northmen's mast that the pirates did not even guess at its existence.

What the Northmen did see was a row of touseled heads along the galley's bulwark, and a galley plunging down on them under a weight of sail that looked like carrying the mast away and bore her down until the keel showed in the trough between two waves.

They could see the boiling ram, and they were smart of helm enough to miss that easily. But they could not see much, in the way of men or weapons, that alarmed them, until Orwic, steadying himself with a foot against the poop rail, loosed his trial shot exactly at the moment when the galley's stern paused swaying on a wave. It was the sway that did the spreading. It was luck, or Lud of Lunden, maybe, that sent twelve arrows screaming straight into the gaps between the Northmen's shields.

The Northmen did not wait for any more of that. Their helm went over instantly. A big man, whose long, fair hair streamed out from under a peaked helmet, shook his fist as the crew hauled on the braces and the longship changed her course toward the coast of Britain.

Tros' cockerels sent flight after flight of arrows after her, and one chance volley of a dozen plunked through the crimson sail, but most of them went wide by half a dozen ship's lengths, and there was no hope of pursuit.

BUT the other Northman, who had been edging his way gradually closer to Hiram-ben-Ahab's flank, turned tail too, because Northmen were easily scared when they did not understand just what was happening, and both longships shook down a reef in a hurry to reach shelter under the cliffs of Kent. So Tros, too, changed his helm, to follow the Phœnician, hoping the Northmen would suppose he had chased them from their quarry in order to capture it himself.

But the instant he changed his course he had to deal with mutiny. The Britons, Orwic leading, swore they would not sail another yard with him unless he should follow the Northmen and force them to give battle.

They called him coward, traitor, a purse-loving Samothracian. They struck the helm away from him and tried to sail the galley for themselves, laying her over until even Tros cried out in terror and half of the water casks broke adrift below, thundering and crashing as if the ship were falling apart.

But the sail did not split, because Tros had jumped to the deck and let the sheets go. So when they all discovered they were helpless, and that was only after they had tried to row with heavy water squirting through the oar ports and a dozen or more knocked senseless as the oar-ends caught them in the jaw, they let Tros take the helm again, threatening to hang him where the dolphin used to swing unless he should pursue the Northmen.

"Then hang me and have done with it!" Tros answered.

And he laughed at them. At which they also laughed, because they understood that he had them at his mercy just then. What should happen later was another matter!

The sail thundered and snapped in the wind and none had a notion how to get it sheeted down again, while the galley rolled and every third or fourth wave swept her from stem to stern.

It was more than Tros knew how to do, although he did have twenty men who could go aloft and lay their bellies on the spar, once he could get that braced and steady, but in some way he had to save the sail. So he sent the twenty men aloft to tie a stout line to its corner and then to cut it loose to blow down wind. When it had flopped into the sea he towed it, to help keep his stern to the waves, wondering what Conops might be thinking, for he knew Conops had missed none of that performance, watching with one eye as good as half a dozen from the old Phœnician's poop.

Then the Britons grew seasick again, the excitement having died, and there were some who said the expedition was a failure, demanding that Tros should put back to Lunden as soon as the storm might permit.

"Where the women will laugh at you, and I will bid them laugh, whether you hang me for it or not!" Tros answered.

He had only one dread now. The galley would survive the storm, but Hiram-ben-Ahab might run out of his bargain. The Phœnician's ship was out of sight, hidden by spume and rain that made a howling twilight of high noon.

A sudden shift of wind made even the direction doubtful, since without a glimpse of sun or coastline, tide across the current and the wind kicking both into a three-way mess of wallowing confusion, there was nothing to set a course by. At dawn old Hiram-ben-Ahab might be a hundred miles ahead.

Tros laughed at himself bitterly. His whole ingenious plan had gone downwind, and, what was nearly as bad, he had lost his good man Conops. He would not have willingly exchanged him for all the Britons, Orwic included. He knew Conops could take care of himself; but he laughed again, and not so bitterly, to think of Skell's predicament, without friends in some foreign port, and with plenty of press gangs on the prowl for a likely oarsman!

There was no one to consult with. Orwic was indignant because he had refused to chase the Northmen.

"Who will be burning Hythe or Pevensey tomorrow as surely as we've lost the way!" he yelled against the wind when Tros said something flattering about his marksmanship with the arrow engine.

Nothing after that to do but pace the poop and watch the sea.

Orwic went below. Even the seaman, who relieved Tros at the helm so that he might sleep in snatches, was impudent and made a suggestive motion of finger to throat, prophetic of what might happen when Orwic had done talking to the crew.

However, they were still afloat and likely to survive the storm. The wickerwork structures built at bow and stern were almost undamaged. The pitched cloth covering was gone, but the marvelously twisted basket work had offered no resistance to the waves, which washed through the interstices, even breaking their force without being torn loose, and keeping many a wave from bursting on the deck.

Tros fell asleep considering that contraption, dreaming of the sweet ship he would some day build—he had her half-designed already in his head—and calculating on a basket-work construction all around her above the waterline, perhaps covered with well-pitched sail cloth, wondering whether that might not serve better than the metal plates he had always had in mind. He could see the possibilities.

He set himself to try to dream of something better than the sail cloth for a covering, and dreamed, instead, of deep-sea monsters that came overside and threatened him with death.

WHEN he awoke, both his own long sword and the shorter Roman one were gone. He was not tied, but Orwic and a dozen other Britons were on the poop, eying him with guarded curiosity. They were leaning against the poop rail, an obvious committee of mutineers.

It lacked an hour of sundown, and the storm had died, but a tremendous swell was running. The sun was an angry red ball above a welter of gray water and the coast of Gaul was like a pencil line behind a curtain of haze on the lefthand. The twenty seamen were all clustered in the bow, as panicky as sheep that smell wolf.

"We propose to go home," Orwic announced, drily, definitely.

"Very well," Tros answered, standing up, arms akimbo, facing them. "Set me ashore on the coast of Gaul."

But Orwic laughed.

"*You* take us home!" he answered.

Tros studied the drift a while, for there was hardly any wind, although the waves were running too high for that crew of horsemen to manage the oars. It was difficult to judge direction in the gray haze, but at the end of a minute he was nearly sure he could hear surf pounding on a beach.

"Let us see whither we go!" he answered, facing them again.

"Home!" repeated Orwic, gesturing rather vaguely to the northward.

But Tros realized that Orwic was ashamed beneath that air of well-bred calm, and that, though he spoke for the committee, he was not its instigator. He had seen a many deep-sea mutinies. He made a gesture to his sword belt, saying

nothing. Orwic actually blushed, which made him look ridiculous, with his hair all blown and touseled and a two days' growth of yellow beard.

"Give me my sword, and I will fight the lot of you," said Tros, turning his back again.

He put both hands behind him, listening. He was sure now he could hear surf pounding on a beach, equally sure that it didn't much matter what happened unless he could control the crew. The mutineers consulted in whispers, which is no way to conduct a mutiny. Out of the corner of his eye Tros could see all the rest of the men clustered around the citadel, most of them chin on knee, squatting on the deck, watching the outcome. And that is not the spirit in which mutinies succeed. It was too bad to have to make a fool of Orwic, but even nephews of Caswallons have to learn.

Tros leaned overside, and noticed that the basketwork was still in place. He was careful to display his interest in that, watching the suck and movement of it as the galley rolled and the sea swirled in and out through the interstices, as if the mutiny were unimportant.

"We will give you your sword if you will agree to take us home," said Orwic.

"No!" Tros answered, facing them again. "If I have my sword I will be captain, and you will obey me. Without my sword I am not captain."

"Then you must obey us!" said Orwic.

"No," Tros answered. "I gave no undertaking to obey you."

"But you shall!" said Orwic.

Tros laughed, for he saw the boy was desperate—between the devil and the deep sea—obliged either to take command of a ship he could not handle or to yield and lose prestige with his own people. There was only one thing that a man of Orwic's breeding could do in that predicament.

"You shall give the undertaking now," he said grimly. But he could not challenge an unarmed man to fight. "Give Tros his sword!" he added, snapping out the four words to the man beside him.

He was pale now, almost gray-white. He could fight on horseback, but he had never tackled a trained swordsman on a swaying deck, and it was growing dark. The sun's red rim was disappearing in a smear of angry haze.

They brought Tros' sword out of the cabin, and Orwic gave it to him, stepping back at once and stripping his own breast bare. For it was against a Briton's code of honor to fight hand to hand unless the opponent could see the naked skin over throat and heart.

Tros threw his own cloak off and unbuckled the heavy Roman breastplate, letting it fall with a clank on deck. Then he tore his shirt to lay bare the huge, hairy breast beneath it, and kicked off his high-laced Roman sandals, for he knew how slippery a swaying deck could be.

He was glad then that the sun went down, being minded to spare Orwic what distress he could. He liked him, liked him well enough to take a long chance.

"Clear the poop!" he snarled, drawing the long blade.

He took three steps forward, straight at the committee, who were leaning with their backs against the rail. They had to go or else resist him. Orwic said nothing, so they went, one by one, down the ladder. All the other Britons swarmed up on the midship citadel to watch. But even as they were swaying shadows in the gloom, so were Tros and Orwic no more than dim specters. Nobody could see much. There was a catching of deep breaths, no shouting, no other sound than the creaking of cordage and the splosh of the waves against the rolling galley's bilge.

"Are you ready?" asked Tros.

Orwic came at him with a leap, whirling a long sword that made the darkness whistle. Tros met him point first, meaning to stand his ground, but the sparks flew and the blows rained on his blade with a din like a blacksmith's anvil and two hammers going.

He had to sidestep and let Orwic flounder away to leeward down the slippery deck, where he could have skewered him as easily against the poop rail as a butcher sticks a sheep. There was a gasp from the midship citadel, followed by a dozen shouts to Orwic to use the point and not the edge, then silence, broken by a cry from the night and the waves:

"Master! Oh, Master!"

THE words were Greek. They sounded to the Britons like the voice of a spirit howling in a wilderness of dark sea. Tros heard them draw their breaths, could almost feel them shudder. He knew the voice, and his heart leaped as

he laughed. The old Phœnician had kept faith! Conops! But he had to keep his eyes on Orwic, who was crouching in shadow, watching his chance to spring.

The voice cried again as Orwic drove with the point at Tros' throat, slipping on the wet deck as he lunged. Tros caught the point under his own hilt, jerking with a sudden movement of the wrist that snapped the Briton's blade. Then, swift as a loosed bowstring, before Orwic could recover he struck upward at the Briton's hilt. The broken sword spun overside, humming, and Tros' point touched the naked skin of Orwic's throat.

"Now cry 'Enough!' Say it! Speak!" Tros ordered.

"Kill!" said Orwic, swallowing and breathing through his nose.

He even pressed his throat against the point until Tros lowered it.

"Will you have another sword?" asked Tros, "and fight me till I slay you? Or will you cry 'Enough!' and take my hand? It seems to me no shame that you should yield. Caswallon gave a hundred of you into my hands——"

"Master! Oh, Master!" cried a hollow voice across the waves.

This time the words were in Gaulish, as if Conops had despaired of his native Greek.

"Lo, the sea answers for me!" laughed Orwic. "Did you offer your right hand?"

Tros passed his sword into his left, and waited. Orwic stepped closer, and Tros hugged him as a father hugs his son, though he was barely four years older than the Briton. It is experience that makes age.

Then suddenly out of darkness Conops climbed the ship's side, springing for the poop, crying:

"Master! Get the anchor down! Rocks! You're drifting on rocks!"

The Britons all surged aft off the citadel to find out what was happening, but Tros drew his sword again at the head of the poop-ladder.

"Back!" he thundered. "Every mother's son! I'll brain the first who disobeys! To your oars! Out oars!"

There was no chance that they could row. He gave them something to divert attention. He could hear the sea a-wash among half-hidden rocks. The pounding of waves on a beach had swelled into one continued roar.

"To the oars and save the ship!" he shouted, pounding the sodden drum.

As they fell back, doubting whether to obey him, Conops went scampering between them through the gloom toward the ship's bow. In another second there were thumps and protests as his knife hilt struck the ribs of seamen, then the splash of the anchor and the hum of a hawser reeling overside.

"She holds!" he roared between his hands a moment later, then charged back to the poop.

"Where is Hiram-ben Ahab?" Tros asked him.

"A scant mile away, sir, anchored in a cove to leeward of the rocks you came near splitting on!" Conops glanced about him, baring his teeth at Orwic. "Any fighting before we work her out of here? She's riding in twice her depth within a ship's length of the reef. We'd better move!"

But Tros could trust that hawser and knew, too, what a frenzied panic the Britons would make of oar work unless he should wait for the sea to die down a bit. There was no top on the sea, but it rolled along, high backed and heavy ahead of the tide.

"Get into your boat and get the sail first, if there's any of it left!" he answered. Then, standing by the poop-ladder—

"Man the benches!"

Half of the crew was still doubting whether to obey him.

"What does she look like?" he asked, turning his back to the crew to give them a chance to obey him without feeling they were being driven.

"Fine in the dark!" said Conops. "She looks twice her size. I didn't know the cloth was all ripped off the wickerwork until I lay alongside in the boat. If we show up off Caritia Sands at dusk, the Romans'll never doubt us."

He went overside with three of the British seamen and spent a half hour disentangling the sail to spill the water out of it before he shouted—

"All clear!"

Then Tros stood over the rest of the twenty and made them haul the sail on deck. Meanwhile, the mist had shifted, gathering itself into a dense bank and following the tide. He could see the reef now and the white line of the breakers on the beach beyond it.

"Lud of Lunden Town!" he muttered.

"Britons, not being sailors, haven't yet spent their sea-luck!"

He shivered. The reef was almost near enough to spit on.

"Out oars!" he shouted, and this time they obeyed him.

Conops ran to the bow to use his knife hilt on the seamen's ribs again, forcing them to man the hawser and haul in the slack. Tros pounded slowly on the sodden bull-skin drum, ready to roar to Conops to let go if the rowers should come to grief and lose the steering way.

The oars dipped deep when the galley rolled and scudded on the wave tops when she hove her side skyward, but the anchor came home foot by foot and Conops let it swing until there was half a mile between them and the reef.

Then, after taking a sounding or two, he let it go and they rolled to it in safety until dawn, with Hiram-ben-Ahab's small boat dancing astern at a long painter's end.

THE two men who had come with Conops were a godsend then, for there was the sail to bend on and they had it done before the light wind came that blew away the mist banks and showed Hiram-ben-Ahab's ship rolling easily at anchor, like a living thing that laughed. The great eyes painted on her bow—so that she might see the way home—seemed to wink when the waves half covered them.

"And Skell?" asked Tros, when Conops came up to the poop for a moment's rest.

"First, when the Northmen hove in sight off Thames mouth, Skell swore he knew them and could make terms," said Conops. "He proposed to show the Northmen the way to Lunden, saying Northmen would not harm a merchant ship* but would be generous in return for such aid as that. He said the Northmen's harvest must have failed and they were coming to seize foothold in Britain.

"But Hiram-ben-Ahab agreed with me there would be a storm before long, and he determined to save Lunden from those pirates if it might be done. So, being sure he had the faster ship, he shortened sail a bit to let them come within arrow range. Then he fired a volley at the nearest one, and shook out reefs, and ran, they giving chase since he had forfeited his rights.

"So he decoyed them until the storm broke and, what with wind and tide, it was too late for them to turn into the river-mouth for shelter. Hey! But he knows how to handle his crew, that old Phœnician! And he handles a ship as if she were a king's mistress!

"When he changed the helm a bit, so that the sea took us under the quarter, Skell was seasick, and riding at anchor hasn't helped him to recover. When I came away he was lying like a dead man on a coil of rope on top of the cargo."

"Is he hurt? You haven't——"

"No, sir. He did call me a liar, as you said he might perhaps. He spoke truth: I changed the lie so often, that he could not do less than turn on me at last.

"No, sir, not the blade, although he tried to use his; no, sir, I didn't tie him; he didn't need it. Those heavy men fall hard. There's a world of chin sticks out under that red beard of his. For a minute or two I feared I'd broken it adrift, and he carries a lump there now as big as a Joppa orange, but the bone's in one piece.

"What troubles him most is his belly. He vomits more than you'd believe a man could hold. Now he thinks he's dead, and now he fears he isn't, but he'll be fit enough for mischief when you land him."

"Good!" said Tros. "Get back to the Phœnician and tell him, if we both live and ever meet again, there's nothing he mayn't ask of me and see it done! Then come and tell me what this galley looks like from a distance. Try to imagine yourself a Roman in Caritia at dusk.

"If we show up at dusk, we'll have another good excuse for not putting in—shoals, tide, wind. But I want to know whether that basket work looks like the real thing from a mile or two away. If it does, tell Hiram-ben-Ahab to sail the minute there's a fair wind for Caritia, but make sure he understands we're to turn up there at dusk. Wait! Has Skell seen this galley yet?"

"No sir. He's lain below ever since seasickness took him."

"Tell Hiram-ben-Ahab to use every ruse he can think of to make Skell *sure* this is a Roman galley straight from Ostia. Let him begin talking smallpox now. Let him ask Skell whether he knows a remedy against it."

* This seems to have been the unwritten rule. A merchant ship was not molested by the North Sea rovers.

CHAPTER IX

TROS MAKES A PROMISE

ALL that day and most of the night following, they lay at anchor while Conops spread pitch liberally on the bows and stern and Tros coaxed his Britons back, into a friendly frame of mind. First he had to reestablish Orwic in their estimation. Orwic had plainly mishandled the mutiny, and some of them were disposed to think he had deliberately lost that hand-to-hand fight in the dark.

So he began by asking whether they thought they had a better man than Orwic. He offered to fight any ten of their own choosing, two at a time, which was sheer guile, because he knew their code of honor, did not permit of two men fighting one. They catcalled at him from the benches, but none offered to match swords, and they listened when he uttered his great rolling laugh and spoke his mind.

"Orwic is blood of your blood. I am not. He had to listen to you, because you are all his equals more or less. But not I! I am the master of this ship. Who gainsays that?"

There was no answer until after a long pause; Tros was not avoiding issues, he was forcing one.

A bow oarsman shouted the word "coward" at him.

"Since when?" Tros asked, and waited.

But that man did not answer. It was another who shouted—

"You ran from two Northmen's ships!"

"As I have eyes, it was the Northmen ran!" Tros answered. "As I have eyes, it was Orwic's work that put them both to flight! As I am a sailor and ye are horsemen, it was impossible to follow. But for my hand at the helm, ye would all be among the fish this minute, belly upward, with the sea birds pecking at your dead eyes!"

"This minute the Northmen are burning our villages!" another voice retorted, and at that there was a murmur of assent.

A heavy man with brown hair down to his shoulders, who pulled the stroke oar on the port side, shouted—

"Sail in search of the Northmen now, and we will catch them at Hythe or Pevensey!"

"Since when have ye so loved the men of Hythe?" Tros answered. "I was there when Caswallon came to summon them to join him against Cæsar, but not a man from Hythe would go! They said they would hold Hythe, and no more. If they were so sure they could hold it then against the Romans who had beaten such gallant lads as you are, can't they hold it now against mere Northsea rovers? What are two ships when Cæsar had more than a hundred ships full of well-armed Roman infantry?"

He had struck the right note, and he knew it. There was no love lost between Lunden and Hythe and Pevensey since the men of Lunden and a handful from eastern Kent had to stand off Cæsar's legions without assistance.

"Now listen to me!" he thundered. His hairy breast was naked, which was intimation that he stood there ready to fight whoever challenged him.

"Caswallon gave you into my charge, holding me answerable, bidding you obey me and be valiant. I will neither flinch nor turn aside. Ye shall obey me, or I will fight you one by one! It is not Hythe ye love, or Pevensey. It is your own town and the honor of your women and the fun of burning Northmen's ships behind them."

There was a cheer, but he raised his hand for silence.

"And now ye help me rescue my father, in which there shall be no fighting if I can help it, since he loves fighting no more than the druids do. But does any man accuse me of not paying what I owe? Has my word ever failed you? I think not. Then hear ye this:"

He paused dramatically, but the histrionics were a ruse. He was scanning faces, making sure that the moment was ripe for the master argument.

"Ye shall obey me first, and I will do my business. Then ye shall have your bellyfull of Northmen, for I will lead you on such a raid as ye have never imagined! No matter whether we catch those two ships, or whether they escape us, or whether they have wrecked themselves along the coast, or whether the men of Hythe* have slain them all. I will take this ship, or another, and as many of you as dare come with me, and we will raid the Northmen in their own roosts in midwinter when they least expect us! We will let them feel for a change what burned homes mean! Now——?"

* The crypt of Hythe Church is full of bones of Northmen killed on the beach. Historians have set a much later —post-Roman—date to the unrecorded battle in which they are presumed to have been killed; but, like many another date "determined" by those same historians, this one is at least doubtful. It is certain that the Northmen regularly raided Britain long before the Romans came.

He had them! They roared him an ovation, knowing he did what he said he would do. None doubted the promise. They wanted to get the oars out then and hurry through the business of catching Cæsar, who was unimportant in their minds compared to the hereditary enemies who had ravaged their coasts and villages since, according to legend, Britain first rose from the sea.

The Roman was an incident. Northmen were a habit, like wolf hunting and marrying and feasting. Besides, the Northmen fought according to accepted but unwritten rules, which made a sport of it, whereas Cæsar was no gentleman; he fought in armor, and used cosmetics, and wore skirts, and—from what they had heard of him—couldn't even carry liquor handsomely.

There was no more trouble after that, not even need for Conops to keep watch while Tros slept. Tros forbade it, rather than let the Britons think he doubted them. And, two hours after midnight, came the favoring wind, a light air that hardly filled the sail, so that they had to row to keep Hiram-ben-Ahab's curved spar in sight, that could ghost along two ships' lengths to their one.

The wind failed by morning, but they were out in midchannel then, so that it was an easy matter to time their arrival off Caritia, dawdling along as if they had picked up the Phœnician at sea and were adjusting their speed to his. Hiram-ben-Ahab kept a good three miles away. There was no risk of Skell detecting anything wrong.

Three miles to the windward of Caritia sands Tros backed the oars and dropped anchor, hoisting, as agreed, a white cloth signal at the yardarm, which meant that the Phœnician should proceed.

Hiram-ben-Ahab had all the necessary documents. Tros' father's chance depended solely now on whether the Phœnician should act his part artfully or make some unforseen mistake.

Tros had a strange, impersonal respect for his old father mixed of many contradictions. As a seaman, who understood strange seas better than most priests know human nature, he almost worshipped him. As an obedient emissary of the Hierophants of Samothrace, he thought him an impractical old visionary.

In theory Tros was willing to admire the mystery-teaching of non-resistance and no vengeance. But in practise he had hung back from initiation beyond the novice's degree—which imposed few obligations—and he forever chafed at his father's prohibitions against taking life. Besides, he knew that his father had been a storming swordsman in his youth.

"Conops!" he said, watching the Phœnician's ship through a light mist that dimmed its outline. "That old mariner knows his own mind. He keeps a promise, Romans or no Romans. You know yours. You are a faithful man. I know mine. I will snatch my father out of Cæsar's hands by any means. But who shall know my father's mind? I think he may blame us all because our method is unethical, as if ethics could influence Cæsar."

Conops was not quite sure what ethics were, but he knew Tros' father, having sailed under him since Tros and he were old enough to learn to splice ropes.

"Master, a Prince of Samothrace must be a dreadful thing to be," he answered. "He is not meek, for you and I have quailed under his wrath when we displeased him. So it is not that he does not feel anger or suffer when Cæsar orders the crew beaten to death before his eyes.

"Hey! What a crew that was! Will we ever find such another? No drink; no women in the ports; no knifing, no neglect, never an order disobeyed. And seamanly! Hey! Master!

"And yet your father, who had trained them, saw them flogged, saw them flogged to death—*hey-yeh—tstchah!* And do you suppose, if we gave him a knife, and showed him Cæsar, he would kill?"

"Not he!" Tros answered. "But, as I said, I know my own mind. I am not one to balk at killing in extremity. Mind you, I said in extremity. I will have no brawling. I have a father, and I choose to rescue him, whether he approves my way or not."

IT WAS very nearly sundown. The Phœnician's sail was a splurge of red on golden water, blurred a trifle by a mauve mist. The galley rolled gently on the swell and all the Britons were leaning overside, their helmets tilted back as they had seen the Roman legionaries wear them.

But there was very little to be seen except shed roofs ashore, the lines of Caesar's tent tops and the masts of fifty or sixty ships that lay hauled out on balks of timber

under the protection of the camp earthwork.

"The town itself, such as it was—shops, booths, drinking-dens and brothels—was invisible beyond the camp. Caesar kept the front door clean.

"You see," said Tros, watching Hiram-ben-Ahab's slow, cautious dip and drift toward the port, "in a sense I am the cause of my father's difficulty. He married, and as long as my mother lived he was not eligible for the higher officers.* So they sent him to sea as Legate of the Mysteries. My mother died, but she died giving birth to me.

"So there he was with a son; whereas, if I had not been born, they would have ceased to reckon him a married man and he might have stayed ashore in Samothrace to attain who knows what eminence in the Inner Shrine. Therefore, but for me, he should never have been Cæsar's prisoner. And that, since it makes me responsible, confers on me the right to rescue him."

"Aye, and in your own way!" Conops answered. He would have agreed with Tros if he had said that the world was round and not flat. "Zeus!† But I would like to burn that camp! Look, Master! If the wind blew from the westward, and a man should creep——"

Silence. Then a murmur all along the ship-side. A liburnian, low in the water and rowed at high speed by a dozen oars, put out from the harbor-mouth and headed straight for Hiram-ben-Ahab's ship, and before the Phœnician could back his sail the sun went down, leaving the galley no more than a creaking black shadow, invisible from shore. Tros ordered no lights shown, for he did not want that liburnian to come and hail him.

"To the benches! Out oars!"

He sent Conops to the masthead. Then, muffling the drum, he moved the galley slowly to a new position about three miles to the westward, and waited again, the men resting on the oars. It was a long time before his ears caught the sound of a splash and the creak of cordage.

"Who comes?" he demanded.

"Both!" Conops leaned from the masthead, trying to make himself heard without shouting. "Hiram-ben-Ahab and the liburnian!"

"Man that arrow-engine, Orwic!"

Followed a clicking and squeak as Orwic wound the crank—the rattle of arrows laid in the grooves in a hurry. Then, dimly, Hiran-ben-Ahab's spar loomed out of the dark and a hail came over the water from the liburnian, invisible astern of the Phœnician.

"Oh, Poseidonius!"

Tros prayed to the gods for a Roman accent! A hoarse voice was his best subterfuge, and his heart in his throat rendered that trick simple! But he waited for the man in the liburnian to repeat the hail; and then, when it came, he almost laughed aloud.

The man was no Roman! By his accent he was from Macedonia or Thrace, one of those adventurers who sold their swords to Rome and often rendered much more faithful service than the Romans did. Tros could talk Latin twice as well!

"Keep away!" he roared. "Small pox! Half the crew sickening! They'll try to jump aboard you if you come close!"

The liburnian backed away. He could hear the hurried oars splash. Then Hiram-ben-Ahab's voice, between coughs, croaking from the poop. Tros could not hear what he said. Then Skell, unmistakable, from the liburnian, in Gaulish, abusing the Phœnician in a voice weak from exhaustion. It appeared he had left money on the ship, and wanted it.

Tros bellowed through cupped hands, omitting verbs because of distance, trusting to the hollow sound to hide discrepancies of accent. The rowers in the liburnian might be Romans, although they probably were not.

"Dispatch—Roman Senate—for Cæsar! Tomorrow—or next day! Fair wind—tide——"

"Have you food and water?" he in the liburnian called back.

"Yes, for a few days."

"Keep away then! Anchor outside! Send in your dispatch by the Phœnician. If you want stores, they can be put aboard his ship for you!"

"All right!" Tros answered. Then, as he heard the liburnian's oars go thumping off into the darkness: "Now, you friends of the god of pestilence! Let Cæsar only be afraid of catching your complaint from Skell, and I think we have him! Row!"

*Marriage was not held to be a crime, but it stood in the way of advancement, being a concession to materiality according to that doctrine.

†An impious exclamation, showing that Conops had not crossed the outer threshold of the Mysteries.

THE BEAT the drum unmuffled, rolling out the strokes triumphantly, setting a course westward along the coast for the Phœnician to follow. Neither ship showed any lights, so there was no chance of the Romans in Caritia knowing which way they had gone.

And because it seemed the gods were blessing the adventure, a light wind blew and wafted them along the coast of Gaul until Hiram-ben-Ahab changed his helm and led the way into a cove he knew. And there they anchored, side by side, a little before dawn. Tros did not dare to leave his Britons so he sent a boat for Hiram-ben-Ahab, who came and sat beside him on the poop.

"There is a village here," said the Phœnician. "But they will run away inland. They will fear we need rowers."

"Skell?" Tros asked him.

The Phœnician laughed, and paid for it, coughed for nearly a minute.

"*Ahkh*—Skell! Sick, yes; but not so very. All the while listening. So he is very sure you are from Ostia; very sure you have a pestilence aboard. He asked whether Tros had gone to Seine-mouth, and in what ship? *Hey-hey!* I told him—dung to a dog—lies to a liar!

"He offered me money if I would persuade the commander of this galley to put into Seine-mouth and prevent Tros from escaping before Cæsar could come! *Hey-yey!* I let my sailors take the money. They took it from him just before they dropped him into the liburnian! *Yarrh!* But he is angry, angry! He is full of spite."

"Cæsar?" asked Tros.

"The man in the liburnian said Cæsar drills his troops too much because there is nothing else to do. The ships, he said, are all laid up for winter—hauled out. He was surprized when I said I thought you had dispatches from the Senate. He said Cæsar receives dispatches overland.

"But I said it was none of my business, only that I was glad to have an escort all the way back to Ostia, and I showed him my permit, signed by you. He could read, but not readily. The seal impressed him."

"And the pestilence?"

"He dreaded it! He did not want to take Skell, fearing my ship might have caught infection. But I said, unless he should take Skell I would sail into the harbor and put him ashore, having your authority to do that.

"Then I told him Skell had information for Cæsar, concerning the Britons, and after that he did not dare to refuse to take him. He laughed, and said, 'Let us hope Cæsar will fear the pestilence, and go away for a while, and give the troops a rest! But I don't envy Skell,' said he, 'because Cæsar will order him to the pest-house, which is no good place!'

"But Skell did not hear that, nor would he have understood, because we conversed in Greek. That fellow is a Macedonian from Pontus, a long way from home! He would have liked to sail with me, although he fears the winter storms."

"Did he ask many questions?"

"Very few. But he said Cæsar would doubtless like to talk with me about the Britons. So I said that Skell, being born in Britain, knew more of them than I did, I being merely a trader in tin, conveying my tin to Ostia for the bronze founders.

"He understood that well enough, but he was puzzled to know why you should risk your galley down the coast of Spain in wintertime, until I told him Rome was in dire straits for tin and you had been sent to look for me and bring me in spite of winter and storms and everything."

"Good!" exclaimed Tros. "You are a man after my own heart, a friend, a lordly liar in emergency!"

"We run a great risk yet," the Phœnician answered. "It may be, Cæsar will not believe Skell. It may be, he will not fear pestilence. It may be, he will be there when we go back to Caritia. What then?"

"We will go soon," Tros answered, "They have hauled out their ships, you say? They can't condition a ship for fighting in less than three or four days. So, if Cæsar smells a rat and sends out the liburnians to seize you, I will rub my Britons' noses into a fight that'll do the rogues good.

"Understand me, Hiram-ben-Ahab: *I* am no Prince of Samothrace. If I don't get my father, I will do such damage to the Romans as shall make them remember me!"

CHAPTER X

ROME'S CENTURION

THOUGH Tros was not a Prince of Samothrace, he had lived in much too close association with his father, who was one, not to be influenced by the occult

philosophy that governed every detail of his father's life.

The secrets of the Inner Mysteries Tros did not know; the power that Samothracian Hierarchs could wield, should they decide to do so, over circumstances and events he thoroughly believed in. He simply was unwilling to pay the price, in abstinence and selflessness, required of aspirants to Initiation, and it was against the drastically administered law of the Mysteries for his father to oblige, persuade or even to invite him to make that effort.

Necessarily, however, he was influenced by his father's views. We habitually ascribed to an Unseen Power things which to other people appeared as mere coincidence.

Tros was less superstitious, more devout, and a vastly more intelligent believer in the Unseen, than most men of his generation. He acknowledged a whole pantheon of gods, but never prayed to them, believing them to be innumerable aspects of a First Cause, whose formless Being was unthinkable, and whose name—supposing anybody knew it—it was blasphemy to utter.

Hiram-ben-Ahab, steeped in strange monotheism tinged by Jewish teaching, was a member of a minor Mystery to which Tros, too, belonged. The world was full of such secret brotherhoods, some based on the Jewish Kabala, some on eastern lore, and all intended to preserve the idea of Brotherhood in the face of cruel superstitions and a growing atheism.

So Tros and Hiram-ben-Ahab—good pious opportunists—were of one mind at dawn, or a little after, when Conops returned from a scouting venture ashore and announced that Cæsar had already passed through a nearby village.

"The gods," said Tros, "have been instructed to make this easy for us!"

He did not believe that any gods did more than that; the rest was left to human energy.

"Certainly." Hiram-ben-Ahab agreed. "Your noble father must have seen with his third eye* what we are doing. He has summoned the gods† to our aid. We can not fail."

Conops had his own opinion.

"Master, you have more brains than a ship load of kings' uncles! Cæsar left Caritia at once! I found one fisherman ashore there, and he lame. He said a chariot came summoning all hands to a place a three hours' journey inland to repair a road, Cæsar having passed along it in the night and complained of its bad condition.‡"

"The tide serves! No storm—no storm!" Tros warned the weather-gods, his eyes on the horizon. "Up anchor, Conops!"

So with oars and flapping sails—for the wind only came in caps-full—they dawdled back toward Caritia, keeping well off shore and timing themselves to arrive again at dusk.

Tros dropped anchor five miles out, but this time he left Conops in charge of the galley and, divesting himself of Roman clothes and armor, wrapping his head in a knotted handkerchief, had himself rowed to Hiram-ben-Ahab's ship, where one of the crew curled his beard for him in the Phœnician style.

"Sail in as close as you dare!" he said, pacing the Phœnician's poop.

But as the masts of Cæsar's ships and the tent tops began to appear in detail through the haze—and that was nearly half-an-hour before the sun went down—two liburnians came rowing at top speed from the harbor mouth, a man in the leading one signaling with a red cloth to the Phœnician to come no further.

The crews of both liburnians stopped rowing when they came within hail. The man with the red cloth stood up in the stern, bellowing through a speaking trumpet:

"Cæsar's orders! You are not to put in to Caritia! Smallpox! Stores—water—elsewhere! Away with you! Proceed at once to Ostia."

It was Tros who answered, giving a rich Greek accent rein:

"We know Cæsar is not in Caritia! We have Cæsar's command in writing to bring away a prisoner named Perseus, who is to be taken to Rome for trial on charges of conspiracy."

"Who are you?" demanded he in the liburnian, bringing his boat a few lengths closer. It was growing very dark.

"Mate of this ship."

"Why doesn't the captain speak?"

"His voice fails. He coughs," Tros

* A synonym for occult vision.

† The gods were the various aspects of natural forces, obedient to such men as knew how to command them. Hiram-ben-Ahab's near-monotheism did not preclude his use of the expression "gods."

‡ Cæsar habitually traveled at the rate of one hundred miles a day, and was, consequently, very particular about the condition of the roads on which mobility depended. They were built and repaired by forced labor.

answered, signing to Hiram-ben-Ahab to stand up and be seen.

"When did you receive Cæsar's order?"

"Last night, when Cæsar visited a cove in which we dropped anchor."

"Did the commander of the bireme deliver Cæsar's writing to *you?*"

"Yes! Smallpox! Five of his crew are down with it. He hopes to reach Ictis, where he may land the crew for a while without risk of desertions or of spreading the sickness among Roman troops. Thereafter, if the winds permit, he will proceed to Ostia."

There was a conference between the captains of the two liburnians. They appeared to be men of the centurion type—the non-commissioned backbone of Rome's army—men used to emergency in every corner of the empire, not supposed or encouraged to be original, but marvelous disciplinarians, obedient unto death.

"Cæsar's orders are—'No communication with you!' one of them shouted at last.

"Our order, in Cæsar's writing, supersedes that!" Tros retorted.

There was another conference. Then:

"The prisoner you seek is dead or dying!"

Tros swore under his breath. There was a long pause before he could get his voice under control. His only chance of success was to seem utterly indifferent. His impulse was to sink the two liburnians and drown their crews.

"Torture!" he growled under his breath, and Hiram-ben-Ahab nodded.

"Maybe Cæsar hopes the pestilence may finish him!" he roared at last, for the liburnians had backed away. "Put him aboard. The outcome is none of our affair!"

The liburnians came closer again.

"Put Cæsar's writing into something that will float, and throw it to us!" shouted a centurian.

"No!" roared Tros. Poseidonius the Roman, who commands the bireme, spoke thus: 'Give them the writing in exchange for the prisoner. Not otherwise!' Poseidonius must answer to the Senate! Shall he give you his authority and whistle to the wide seas for his man? What kind of officers are you, to try that trick? Bring out the prisoner! There may be a wind before morning, and we want to make the tide."

There was another conference, and then the liburnians rowed away. Tros shouted after them:

"Poseidonius says this: 'Unless you deliver the prisoner promptly, he will sail into the harbor at dawn, and you must take your chance with the pestilence. Having Caesar's writing, he will not be delayed. He is in haste to proceed to Ictis,' "

Hiram-ben-Ahab gestured, and croaked from out of his doubled and redoubled shawls:

"A mistake! A mistake! They will not believe a bireme dares to land a crew on Ictic. A trader, yes. A warship, no."

Tros clicked his teeth irritably.

"I had to tell them some place! Maybe they will think you told me of Ictis. You are a trader. They may suppose I don't know the people of Ictis are warlike."

But Hiram-ben-Ahab shook his head. He looked like an old vulture of ill omen. Then worse happened—and worse again!

OVER the water from the galley came the noise of singing and a row of dots of light gleaming through the cabin ports.

"They have broached the mead!"

Tros thrust a paper into the Phœnician's hands.

"Don't part with that until they hand my father over! Hoist him aboard with the halyard. Satisfy yourself that he really is Perseus, Prince of Samothrace. Then throw them the document. If I don't quiet those idiots they'll ——"

He went overside into the small boat like a squall out of a dark sky, and the British rowers nearly broke their backs to try to please him. Ten minutes later he leaped up the galley's side, and the first thing he saw was Conops lashed hand and foot to the mast with a gag in his teeth. He cut him loose, and rushed into the cabin under the poop.

Orwic sat on the table drinking mead, surrounded by as many as could crowd themselves into the place. The remainder were in the citadel. They were roaring a long chorus about Lunden Town.

Tros stood back to the doorway, his strong teeth glinting in the light of the horn lantern, until surprize took full effect and all grew silent.

"You're a fine ship load of meat-fed* Romans with the smallpox!" he growled,

* Roman soldiers and sailors usually mutinied if their rations contained too much meat. Cæsar writes of his men's heroism when, on one occasion, they ate meat for several days.

grinning. "Were you going to eat Conops next?"

"Your man was too full of his own importance," Orwic drawled. "He actually knifed a friend of mine. Where's Cæsar? Are we ready to start back? Here—have some mead."

Tros drank with him. There was only one barrel of the stuff aboard, supposed to be for medicine. The best plan seemed to be to finish it.

"If you'll hold your tongues," he said, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, "and make those young asses in the citadel douse the lights and be quiet, I'll give you a crack at Cæsar before you're two days older. Otherwise, I'll guarantee you at the bottom of the sea by midnight! Suit yourselves!"

Orwic strolled forward to the citadel, his apparently casual eyes alert for Conops, who fingered an empty sheath and glared at him. Presently the singing ceased and lights went out. Tros sat on the table, playing boon companion, for there was no other way just then of managing those gentry.

"Here's your knife!" said Orwic cavalierly, tossing the thing to Conops as he came back out of the darkness. "Keep it for your equals, or your betters will have to have you whipped!"

"Don't you young idiots know," said Tros, "that the gloomiest place on earth is a Roman bireme that had been two months at sea, as we're supposed to have been? The crew are always down with scurvy. You have smallpox in the bargain!

"To enforce discipline, the commander has used the scourge; he has thrown men overboard; he has chained unruly rowers to the benches. He's as sick and ill tempered as the rest of you. He has boils on the back of his neck. The omens are all wrong; they always are when a man has specks before his eyes.

"You've been fed dry meat, which a Roman hates, and mouldy bread, which sickens you to look at! There are rats in the water casks, so you're afraid to drink. You're short of fuel, so you can't boil water or cook your rations. There's a curtain of weed a yard long on the galley's bottom, which trebles the labor of rowing. The bottom leaks and you have to man the buckets day and night.

"The sail won't draw, because it's full of holes, which your fingers are too swollen and cracked to mend. The ship stinks. Such blankets as you have are full of vermin. You hate one another even worse than you hate your officers.

"If those people in Caritia get a hint that you're merrymaking, they'll not stop to argue. They'll know we're no Romans out from Ostia! As you love Lunden Town and hope to see it, be miserable!"

He had to carry on in that vein. He had to tell them tales of Roman ships he had seen in foreign ports, coming in with a crucified* man at the masthead and the rowers so rotten with scurvy that their teeth had fallen out and the skin fell away from them like scales from a decaying fish.

"You're supposed to be feeling like that!" he insisted.

And when they had finished laughing at him, being Britons, they found an entirely different reason for doing what he asked.

"You're a foreigner, so I suppose we must make allowances," said Orwic.

Tros got up the anchor and set them to rowing, least the liburnians might sneak out on him in the darkness to investigate.

The Romans were quite capable of that Julius Cæsar had been known to swim broad rivers under cover of the night, to do his own scouting when he doubted the tales that were brought to him. But if liburnians had come, their crews would have heard such dismal groanings at the oars, such cries of anguish, as might have made them believe it was a prison ship.

Orwic, with some pitch smeared on his arms and legs to represent the scurvy, walked up and down the plank beside the rowers flourishing a cord with which he made believe to flog them, and nothing would satisfy them until Tros sent a man to the masthead to pretend he was crucified up there. Now that they were over seasicknesses they seemed to understand no middle course between comedy and mutiny.

Tros, forgetting that man at the masthead, for he soon grew tired of groaning, steered the galley slowly toward Hiram-ben-Ahab's ship, arriving within easy hail about a minute before the liburnians came thumping through the night. Then he implored his crew to be silent, gesticulating with both fists, and the Britons leaned on the oars

* The victim was hardly ever nailed. He was tied with rope, and left to suffer from sun, flies and thirst. The same form of punishment was used by armies in the field as recently as 1918.

to listen, not that they could understand a word of Latin. There was nothing visible except the dim, shadowy outline of the Phœnician's ship.

"Here's your man!" cried some one.

"What is his name?"

That was Hiram-ben-Ahab's voice, wheezy and suspicious.

"Perseus."

"Is he alive. I won't take him if he's dead."

"Yes, he lives. Come on, throw a line! And hand over that written order!"

"There goes the line—catch! *Yarrh*—what duffers! Throw again there, you. Now! What's that? No! I'll throw you down the writing when I've seen the man. Put the rope under his armpits. Gently now—haul away—gently, gently, gently!"

Silence, in which everybody held his breath. Then the Phœnician's voice:

"All right. Here is the writing. Catch."

Tros sighed relief. The Britons, all eyes on his silhouette against the poop rail, saw the shoulder movement and sighed with him, swinging the oars for the dip. The man at the masthead heard that, and accepted it as leave to play the idiot—he had a gallon of good mead under his painted leather armor.

"*Wow!*" he yelled. "*Hoi!* You there! Romans! Tell Cæsar, next time he tries to conquer Britain——"

"Silence!" Tros thundered, but too late.

There was a roar of laughter from the hold. The liburnians came hurrying to investigate, their oars churning the water in short, sharp strokes.

Their officers knew Gaulish when they heard it, even if they had not caught the words. Hiram-ben-Ahab, making no sound, let his ship swing slowly on the tide. There came the sudden creak and rattle of his mainsail going up, and a man in one of the liburnians shouted to him to drop anchor.

"Poseidonius! Oh Poseidonius!" cried a voice from the other liburnian, nearly alongside.

Tros did not answer. He pounded the drum and the oars began to thump and swing in unison. But he had to swing the ship before he could hoist sail. There was hardly any wind at that, and the liburnians could out-row him two for one. A low, dark, skilfully maneuvered vessel shot in under his stern, and again a voice hailed him:

"Hey, there! Poseidonius!"

"Drown him!" yelled the Britons. "Plug him full of arrows!"

The man at the masthead offered himself for a target to the Romans, waving arms and legs and caterwauling. Tros had to make the best of it.

"Come aboard!" he suggested in his choicest Latin, speaking drily, imitating Cæsar's voice as nearly as he could. Then:

"Stand by that arrow-engine, Conops! Man the crank there, you! Come aboard, Centurion! Did you hear me? Come aboard!"

He beckoned. Orwic and a dozen Britons left the oars and crouched under the bulwark. The liburnian had come in under the galley's counter, too close for the arrow-engine, its bow nosing in under the starboard oars. The other liburnian was keeping a safe distance.

TROS lowered a thick rope with knots in it. The centurion, half curious, half conscious there was nothing else he could do unless he chose to be shot or sunk, came up hand over hand.

He was allowed to reach the poop before the Britons pounced on him and took his sword away. He offered no resistance so they let him stand, with Orwic close behind him and two others ready to jump on him if he should move. He stood like a man, with his chin high and a short, stubby, pugnacious beard sticking out under it.

"What is this?" he demanded.

He was not afraid. He was scandalized that a foreigner should dare to take such liberties with Rome. Tros loved him.

"Centurion," he said, "tell me first, is my father unharmed? I am Tros, the son of Perseus Prince of Samothrace."

"So you are he?" said the centurion. "Your father has been treated as you will be, when Cæsar catches you! They who conspire against the Senate and the Roman People, all get their deserts in time!"

"Has Cæsar tortured him?"

"I believe he was racked."

Tros ground his teeth and spoke to Orwic over the centurion's shoulder.

"He is your prisoner. What do you wish?"

"He is yours," said Orwic. "Do what you like with him."

"Do you hear that?" said Tros. "You are my prisoner." The centurion nodded. He

seemed perfectly indifferent. "Take back your sword then and obey me. Tell Cæsar, when the day comes I will deal with him and not with a centurion! Tell Rome, the Senate and the Roman People, that I, Tros, am the enemy of Rome from this day forth!"

Tros signed to the Britons to stand aside.

"No enemy of Rome lives long!" the centurion answered. "Farewell, Tros!" There was a clank of bronze as he saluted. "I will deliver your message, although I think you are a fool. Cæsar will crucify you for it."

CHAPTER XI

"GOD GIVE YOU A FAIR WIND, HIRAM-BEN-AHAB!"

THE other liburnian tried to head off Hiram-ben-Ahab and force himto drop anchor, but the wind came athwart tide and current, lending the Phœnician heels and forcing the smaller craft to run for shelter. Tros paced the poop, fretting at the galley's slowness as he followed in the Phœnician's wake.

The Britons were all cock-a-hoop and skylarking, Orwic imitating the centurion, thrusting out his throat and chin exactly as the Roman did. And one of the others took off Tros so perfectly, hilt forward, arms akimbo, feet apart, teeth showing in a large, alert grin, that even Tros came out of his dudgeon at last and laughed.

"You young dogs! You have lost Cæsar for me! You would laugh if Lunden burned!"

"Lost him? Wait and see!" said Orwic.

"See? You shall see a fight, or I don't know the Romans! They can overtake Cæsar with a message much faster than we can sail to Seine-mouth. That is why I gave that centurion something for the messenger to say."

"Why then go to Seine-mouth? Why not leave Cæsar whistling?" Orwic suggested.

"I told Caswallon I will go to Seine-mouth, and I will. I told Hiram-ben-Ahab I will escort him, and I will. I told Cæsar, by the mouth of Skell, that I will go to Seine-mouth. So I will. I have promised you a brush with Cæsar. You shall have one!"

He was grateful for the rising sea, that made it dangerous to approach the Phœnician closely. He did not want any conversation with his father just then, felt too sure the old man would forbid vindictiveness, with his dying breath, perhaps. Tros could not stomach such an interview. He knew that if his father should exact a promise from him he would make and keep it. He preferred not to run that risk.

"Let the gods attend to it!" he growled, turning to face Conops at the helm. "My father and the gods are intimates. If it is right for him to bind me in his violenceless peace before he dies, let them bring us together."

Conops did not answer. He knew that mood just as well as he knew that he and Tros could cross that intervening quarter-mile of sea in a boat, if Tros cared to do it.

They had sailed much rougher seas together, in worse boats than the hide-and-wicker thing they carried. Conops, lacking an eye because he had dared to answer Cæsar pertly, also would have obeyed Tros' father if commanded with the old man's dying breath to let bygones be.

Like Tros, though, he craved no such injunction. He respected the old man as much as Tros did. Like Tros, loved him well enough to run all risks to snatch him out of Cæsar's hands. But, like Tros again, knew too well, from grim experience, that the peace of non-resistance is a warfare that does not suit uninitiated men. It is easier and more exciting to fight Cæsars than to wrestle with emotions in oneself.

So they boiled and plunged along in the Phœnician's wake, he standing well out from the shore, until dawn found them nearly out of sight of land and the gale increasing. It was almost too rough to keep footing on the deck, but Tros made Orwic drill the Britons with bow and arrow and train them at imaginary floating marks with the well-oiled arrow engines. They grumbled because he would not let them use up ammunition, even threatened to defy him.

"Very well," he answered. "Fight with bare hands if you choose! Cæsar will be lying up for us in Seine-mouth with all the ships he can find. If we come on him at night, and see him first, we may burn his ships. If not, and if he sees us first, we shall be hard put to it to guard that old Phœnician's rear while he makes his escape homeward!

"As I know Cæsar, we will need every arrow we have, and pray for more before we're through with him!"

So they loosed blank bows at an imaginary mark, practising the quick combination of hand and eye at any angle that is the secret of efficient marksmanship.

"Speed!" Tros urged them. "Speed! Three arrows in the air at once, and all aimed straight!"

"Cæsar will have no arrow engines," Conops reminded him. "His warships are laid up for winter. The best he can get will be Gaulish fishermen or merchantmen, slow, slower than we are, low in the water, leaky. Give us half a gale like this one, and——"

"I know Cæsar!" Tros retorted. "That fox will have a trap set!"

And he paced the poop again, pounding his palm in his fist, pondering, matching his wits against the cleverest Roman of them all.

His main objective was to escort the Phœnician to open sea and safety. Would Cæsar guess that? Much would depend on what Skell might have told. If they had thrown Skell into a pest house and conversed with him across the dung heap that surrounded it, Skell might have said almost anything.

Tros made up his mind at last that, whatever Skell had said, Cæsar would conclude now that it was all part of one and the same trick. Cæsar would learn by messenger that two ships, one a trader, one a captured Roman galley, were acting with forged documents in close cooperation. He would do his utmost to catch both ships.

And if he believed that Seine-mouth story at all, he would probably take such ships as he could get and put to sea, with the idea of bottling both in the river-mouth if they should enter. Failing which, if the whole tale were a ruse, he would stand a good chance of catching both ships in the open. Cæsar was the last man in the world likely to sit still and let things happen to him.

The second objective—and Cæsar might guess that too—was to place his father, dead or living, among friends. If he should die there were rites that he, Tros, only he, could properly perform. Dry land, Britain, Lunden, with the Druids helping, was the proper place for them.

The third objective was to punish Cæsar drastically, to capture Cæsar if he could.

He finally made up his mind that Cæsar would be no such fool as to risk his own life in a hurriedly conditioned ship, without very definite information as to where the enemy might be. He would send his men to sea, and wait with the cavalry, or whatever other troops he might have available, at some point whence he could signal and conduct the operations.

But he was sure of this: That wherever the fighting should take place, there Cæsar would arrive, if it were possible, to take command if his men were having the worst of it and to seize for himself the credit in any event.

HIGH noon saw Tros still thinking and Hiram-ben-Ahab hove to, waiting for him, with a big sea wetting the ships' decks as they plunged with a couple of miles between them, nearly out of sight of land.

When Tros had brought his galley within hailing distance and had quieted his Britons so that he could hear, the Phœnician's mate howled to him that the man at the masthead had reported three sails low down on the horizon near the Gaulish shore, proceeding westward. He added that Tros' father was unconscious in the cabin.

"Has he spoken?"

Tros waited for the answer with his fingers clenched into his palms, and sighed enormously when it came at last, howled through a speaking trumpet:

"No-o-o! No word!"

"Then we are not forbidden!"

He slapped Conops on the shoulder.

"Tell your master," he bawled back, "to keep behind me until nightfall!"

Then he took the lead and set full sail, in order to arrive within sight of Seine-mouth as near sunset as he could, sparing his Britons all labor at the oars, making them eat and rest, using every trick he knew to make them conscious that the effort of their lives was coming.

There was no more sign of Cæsar's ships, although he had Conops at the masthead, and Conops' one eye was worth a score of other men's. There was no sign even of fishing boats, a fact not wholly accounted for by the high sea that was running. Men who fish for a living often have to haul their nets in half a gale. The sea was empty, in the way the fields are when a thousand men lie ambushed.

He dropped anchor and lowered his sail within sound of the surf that pounded on the mud banks off the estuary, a little too near sunset to satisfy him entirely, wishing

Cæsar keener vision than the eagles whose images were perched on Roman standards.

And there he waited, rolling comfortably in the mud bank's lee, studying the color of the water and the inshore landmarks, until Hiram-ben-Ahab came within hail and dropped anchor astern of him. Then he and Conops rowed to the Phœnician's ship.

"What now?" asked the Phœnician.

But Tros went straight to his father, down under the poop in the cabin crowded with skins, wicker baskets and a hundred other marvels for the Alexandrian trade. There were several nightingales* in a wicker cage, and a starling with a cut tongue, who could talk a dozen words.

Tros' father lay on the Phœnician's bed, calm as in death, his eyes closed and the tortured wrists crossed on his breast. His long gray beard appeared to have been combed by one of Hiram's men, and the torn skin of his ankles had been wrapped in linen.

"*Tchuh, tchuh, tchuh!* They racked his joints apart!" said the Phœnician.

Conops knelt by the tortured feet, muttering Greek blasphemies. Tros stood scowling, hands behind him, grinding strong teeth.

"Has he spoken?" he asked.

"Not a word," said the Phœnician.

But it was as if the old man had reserved his strength for what he knew was coming. His lips moved two or three times. Then the voice came, as if from another world, as if the soul had left the body and were using it for one last communication. It was so dark Tros could hardly see his father's face.

"Tros, my son, you would obey my will. But that is not my will. I, who was a fighter in my youth, ceased from fighting with men's weapons. But I, Perseus, sowed the seeds of fighting when I fathered you. And now knowing the full strength of your obedience you dread what I will lay upon you. But I forbid nothing; since the seed that may not sprout in one way breaks forth in another.

"Hear my last words and remember them. All warfare is with self. All that you know of Cæsar is your own image, cast in the reflection of your own unconscious thought. Be brave. Be noble. You shall know strange seas.

"But you shall not slay Cæsar, though you try, since that is others' destiny. Cæsar shall serve you, and you shall serve him, each to the other's undoing, but many things will happen before that time. And now, my son Tros, I have finished with the body that begat yours and its wanderings. In your hands, Tros, I leave it. Let it not be cast into the sea or lie unburied."

So Perseus died, in darkness, in a creaking ship, the silence pulsed with heavy breathing and stirred by the fluttering of nightingales in a swaying wicker cage. After a long while Tros and Conops wrapped the body carefully and rowed it to the galley, where they laid it on the bed that had been Cæsar's and covered it with Cæsar's own cloak.

Then Tros returned to the Phœnician and said good-by to him.

"For whether I fail tonight, or whether I succeed, you must run when Cæsar's ships come hurrying in on the tide. Your man saw three ships. There were likely six or seven; maybe more. Cæsar has seen us anchor here. He will think we await the tide to take us up the river.

"I am sure that beacon, yonder to westward, where a hill looms back of the coastline, is his signal to the ships to come out from their hiding place and follow us up river!

"So now you and I put to sea again, showing no lights, and when the last of Cæsar's ships puts in, I follow! But you turn homeward. God give you a fair wind, Hiram-ben-Ahab! And may we meet again!"

CHAPTER XII

"NEITHER ROME NOR I FORGIVE!"

TROS boiled with mixed emotions. Had his father, dying, not assured him he would live and know strange seas? Could this night's venture fail, then? Such men as Perseus speak prophetically on a death bed.

Tortures such as Cæsar had inflicted flay away personal values and leave nothing in the thought but sheer fact, which was why courts applied torture to witnesses. If they had tortured the judges, too, there might have been some sense in it.

He should not slay Cæsar, since that was others' destiny. Might he not capture Cæsar? He and the Roman were to serve each other, each to the other's undoing.

* In Cleopatra's reign, a few years later, nightingales were plentiful in the Grove of Eleusis, near Alexandria.

Nothing in that about not punishing Cæsar first!

With all his heart and strength, with all his cunning, to the limit of the bold, storm-daring will that glowed through his amber eyes, Tros burned to punish Cæsar. He was in a mood that night to kill a hundred men, if only the lean rascal who had conquered Gaul might pay the price.

And dark night favored him. Wind howled in the rigging, but there was not much weight behind it, and presently the rain came down in torrents, beating the waves flat. Tide served the Romans too, perfectly. Two hours before midnight he could count eight swaying lights to westward, and knew he had outguessed Cæsar. The Roman ships were coming into Seine-mouth from some hiding place along the coast; they were sure he and the Phœnician were up the river some place and that they could cut off their escape.

But the galley wallowed in the murk a good two miles to windward of them, under a scrap of sail, with the oars a-dip at intervals to keep her from drifting inshore. Farther, still, to seaward Hiram-ben-Ahab's ship lay hove to, waiting for the last Roman light to sway clear of Seine-mouth shoals and turn up river before she filled away with the northerly wind abeam and plunged for home.

The shore line was invisible. But Cæsar had set that beacon on a hilltop to guide his own ships. Now another light appeared. up the estuary, big, low down, almost as if a house were burning near the shore line.

"Cæsar!" said Tros to himself. "That's where the troops are waiting! Hah! He'll have twenty or thirty boats there, hidden among the reeds. And he's as sure I'm up the river as I'm sure—Conops," he exclaimed, taking the helm himself, "tide's been making four hours. We've got until it turns—not a minute longer! Upriver, at grips with Cæsar—out again on the flow at daybreak!"

"And the dirtiest mess of mud shoals ever a ship sat on!" Conops retorted. "Wind enough to drive her beak in as if she'd grown there! A heavy sea astern!"

"Make sail!" Tros answered. "Then get forward and take soundings. Keep on crying me the cubits until I say 'Cease,' if we do hit bottom, hurry aft and stand by me."

Came the creak and groan and thunder of a mainsail rising, sharp, impatient shouts from Conops; then the galley heeled and headed straight for Seine-mouth with a burst of rain behind her, that curtained everything except a glimpse of foam boiling in the pitch dark.

Nothing but the wind to steer by; no sign of Cæsar's beacons. Thunder, solid and continuous, of surf on mud banks; then friendly thunder, from the sky, lightning, that made Tros swear at first, until he laughed aloud.

It showed him a line of white surf boiling over shoals, and Cæsar's eight ships wallowing too close to it! Mean little ships, Gaulish coastwise trading vessels, black with men, not too near to the shoals if given sea room to the eastward, but much too near if crowded by an enemy. White water ahead of them, where the 'tween-shoal channel narrowed.

"Orwic! Four men in the fighting-top! Man starboard arrow engines! Ten men on the citadel! Line the starboard rail. Hold fire until I give the word—dagger the man who shoots without permission!"

Flash after flash of lightning. Eight ships staggering before the wind in rough formation like a flight of geese, the shorter arm of the V to eastward. They were all too close together, aiming for a channel that they evidently knew, too watchful to look behind them, or the lightning might have shown them the galley's sail in time.

"Ten!" howled Conops, pitching his shrill voice against the wind.

The galley drew seven cubits.

"Stand by! Ready, all!" Tros thundered, not changing the helm a hair's breath, trusting memory.

"Nine!" yelled Conops.

Then three vivid lightning-flashes in succession, and Tros did change the helm—excitedly. He saw dark water, headed for it.

"Eight!" yelled Conops, as if the end of the world had come.

He was heaving the lead from the starboard chains. The galley's port side bumped the mud and her stern swung westward. But she heeled, for they did not let go the sheet, and the next wave, and the next, that crashed against the high poop drove her into deeper water.

"Ten!" yelled Conops, hurrying aft, for she had hit the mud, and that was orders. "Deep water straight ahead, sir!" he bellowed in Tros' ear.

"Aye! And shallow to westward! We have them!" Tros answered.

He was laughing, not at what the lightning showed, for that was tragedy; no sailor laughs to see men drown. He was laughing at his Britons, drenched to the skin. Their bow-strings wrapped dry in their cloaks, who had not even known they were in danger when they bumped the mud!

THE Romans had seen him at last. They were in panic, with a boiling shoal on their right hand and an enemy coming down on them to windward. The rain ceased, but the wind rose.

Cæsar's beacon shone out of the night like something that had been asleep. There was another, lower light to shoreward of it. Tros guessed they showed the channel and set his course straight for the two, keeping them in line, with the wind on his port quarter, racing to crowd those eight ships on the shoal to westward of the channel, where the estuary curved to the eastward. He had the wind of them and, slow though the galley was, she could outsail any of those eight.

Three ships clawed around and tried to beat to sea again. He could hear the thumping and the shouts as they struggled to man the oars. One ship's sail went with a crack as if her mast had gone too. One was swamped within a bowshot of the galley's bows.

Tros beaked the third, driving the great iron-shod ram into her broadside, rolling her over and sinking her as the galley pitched on a wave.

The Britons squandered arrows, orders or no orders, Orwic with the rest of them, smiting Conops on the mouth, back handed, when the Greek tried to pull him away from the poop arrow engine. Then arrows began to rain on the galley's deck from the five ships that struggled with wind and tide like dancing fantoms in the wedge-shaped channel entrance.

One of them went aground and the waves burst over her with a din like thunder. Four, under staggering oars and badly handled sail, raced neck and neck, masking one another's fire, Roman-fashion risking all in one supreme effort to grapple and have the fight out on the bireme's deck.

Tros beaked the nearest as she swung. With her sheets let go, but a dozen Romans leaped into the bireme's bows, where they were massacred with arrow fire from Orwic's engine, that came near cutting down the Britons who rushed to use their swords.

There was no discipline. No order, no command could have been heard above the shouting and the crash of breaking ships.

Two more of Cæsar's ships collided, and Tros beaked them both, breaking the first on the bows of the other and leaving both to drift on the deafening shoal. But their arrows swept the citadel, and the shock stopped the bireme's way, nearly splitting the sail.

Conops let both sheets go in the nick of time to save the bireme from capsizing. And before they could get the mainsail sheeted down again, with ten of Orwic's Britons dragged and driven aft to help the sailors, the last of Cæsar's ships had crashed alongside.

Grapples struck into the deck and pierced the bulwark. Fifty of Cæsar's legionaries leaped up the bireme's side, and the fight was on in darkness, with the two ships grinding together in the trough of steep waves.

Then the beacon lights went out, or else were screened. The wind increased to a full gale, and though the moon showed once or twice between the racing clouds there was nothing to show the channel's course. The Romans, silent, shoulder to shoulder on the heaving deck, were driving the Britons fore and aft in front of them.

Tros trusted then to the gods, and his father's prophecy, and the strength of the Roman's grappling chains. He put the helm hard up, until the small ship struck the mud and the bireme's weight hammered her into it.

Then he sprang from the poop, let go the sheets and, with a shout that the Britons heard above the din of sea and crashing timbers and loose sail, plunged into the fight.

Part of the bireme's bulwark broke away, and she swung down wind in mid channel, anchored by the other grapnel to the wrecked, swamped, smaller ship, tugging at it like a hooked sea monster, until none could keep his footing and Tros nearly rolled through the gap in the broken bulwark, at grips with a Roman centurion.

Blood and spray churned into scum. A dozen Britons, cornered in the bow, loosed flight after flight of arrows humming through the darkness, so that both sides

struggled for the shelter of the citadel And it was there that Tros' long sword began to turn the tide of battle, for he caught the stoutest Roman of them all and skewered him through the throat against the bulkhead.

Then Orwic sprang beside him from the shadow, dripping blood from scalp wounds —his Roman helmet had gone overboard— and Conops found his master, guarding his back with a flickering two-edged knife. They three swept that section of the deck, rallying other Britons to them, until Tros thought of a ruse. But as he thought of it the bireme broke the grapnel chain at last and plunged up channel, beam to the waves and swaying drunkenly before the wind.

So he seized Orwic's quivering arm and tugged him—no need to signal Conops, who was like a dog at his master's heel. They three, and a dozen after them, sprang for the poop, where Conops took the helm and tried to keep midchannel. Tros stood sword in hand at the edge of the poop bull-bellowing, in Latin, lungs out-thundering the din:

"Omen! An omen! Cæsar's eagle, falling from the sky!"

His voice burst on a pause. Briton and Roman were gathering for another rush. The Romans, superstitious about omens to the verge of madness, turned to look at him.

The eagle they saw was Tros, feet first, leaping on them from the poop. He landed on two men, ran a third through the head, and vanished scrambling away into the darkness of the scuppers. Orwic came next. Almost before the Briton's feet touched deck Tros was up beside him and they two charged forward, bellowing:

"Lud of Lunden! Lud of Lunden!"

The Britons rallied to that cry until all the deck was clear, except of dead and dying, and there were only half a dozen Romans left to deal with, who had fought their way into the citadel and held it.

Tros left the Britons to attend to that. He looked for the crew, and found them at last, below-deck, hiding among water casks. He hauled them out of darkness one by one, cuffed them and drove them on deck. The bireme had worked under the lee of a low hill and was turning slowly in mid-current, drifting toward unimaginable mud-banks over which the waves were gurgling as a river gurgles when it overflows the fields.

Tros left Conops at the helm and drove the crew forward, where he belabored them until they dropped the heavy anchor over-side and the bireme came head to wind at last.

For a while he waited in the bow, watching to discover whether the anchor dragged or held; but there was nothing to judge by; he could see no land-marks, only gloom, and beyond it a long, deep shadow that was land.

The Britons were busy stripping Romans of their armor; he heard them drag the last one from the citadel; heard the splash as the body went overboard, then Orwic's voice:

"Nine-and-forty! Not bad! How many have we lost?"

THERE was a long pause, full of murmurings. Tros sat down on the bitts, rubbing bruises thoughtfully, feeling himself from head to foot, his spirits falling, falling as the minutes sped, and the count was not yet done. At last Orwic's voice again:

"Are you sure that's all? Seven-and-twenty dead. How many hurt?"

Again a long count, interspersed with argument as to whether or not a sword slash was an injury. Then the answer:

"Two-and-thirty."

"Almighty Zeus!" Tros murmured. "One-and-forty of a hundred fit to fight, and Cæsar waiting for me down the river! Cæsar with eight ships and about four hundred men! Cæsar with wind in his favor and dawn to see by! Cæsar and all Gaul to draw from! Hah!" he laughed, heaving himself to his feet, "but I'll con the channel seaward by the bones of ships! By Cæsar's grief, I'll find the way!"

No lights! He did not dare to show a light, not even in the hold among the water-casks where they laid the wounded, with a few men who could crawl around to serve out water to them, binding wounds by the feel with thread-drawn linen that Caswallon's wife had sent aboard.

The dead they laid on the deck in one long row, face upward, and covered with the spare sail. Then Tros cast about for the strongest men and sent them to the benches, fifteen to each side.

There were scarce two hundred arrows

left of all the thousands they had brought with them, and though they added to the number scores more that the Romans had shot into the woodwork, there were even then not more than ten or eleven excited Britons could use up in as many minutes.

Then a leak to plug, below the waterline, where one of the ships the bireme beaked had opened up a seam. Thereafter, the scared and sulky seamen to be driven into the rigging to patch that, and to get the sail rebent where the wind had wrenched it from the spar.

Then gray dawn; sea birds crying over wastes of marsh; gulls screaming where a corpse lay drifting in the mist; wind still in the north, but less of it; a great swell rolling up the estuary and lumping where it met the tide, that had begun to flow down river.

"Up anchor, Conops!"

Oars, and only thirty weary men to man them, the bireme beginning to feel the flowing tide, but prone to swing before the wind, and bucking on the lumpy water so that the oarsmen repeatedly missed stroke.

No drum for fear of warning Cæsar. Groans from the dark hold, as discouraging as the chilly daybreak, but a fog coming in on the wind in hurrying gray whisps, with patches of clear air between, for which Tros thanked the gods of Gaul.

"If only Cæsar sleeps!"

The wish was father to that thought, as always. Tros' eyes were heavy. Every fiber of him ached from too much strain and no relief. His head swam and things multiplied themselves. He had to look three times to see a landmark once. The wrecks of Cæsar's ships, glimpsed between scurrying drifts of gray, seemed never in the same place twice.

But minute by minute the tide flowed faster, the wind lessened and the fog increased. There was no sound but the surge of water, the muffled thump of oars, and the cry of sea-birds. Tros could sense a coming shift of wind, and he knew he had twice as much sea room as the night before, because the tide was higher.

"All's well, master! We have given him the slip!" said Conops as the first wreck loomed in the fog for a moment and vanished astern.

He was heaving the lead from the poop, lest the sound of his voice should carry as he cried the changing depths.

But Tros knew that Cæsar, craftiest and most resourceful Roman of them all, was the last man in the world to leave an outrage to the Roman dignity and eight wrecked vessels unavenged.

"Drum now!" he ordered. "I want every last tremble of speed!"

Speed now, and nothing else counted! If Cæsar was not in the neck of the channel waiting for him, all the warning in the world would reach the Romans too late, and if he were there, nothing mattered but the impact.

There was only one way Cæsar could prevent him from escaping. Somewhere, somehow he might have collected small boats and have moored them across the channel, using a stout cable anchored at both ends.

That was what Tros argued he would have done in Cæsar's place, with every available man who could be crowded into the boats, ready to jump aboard the bireme when she struck the cable.

"Faster! Faster!" he commanded, peering forward on the port side for a glimpse of wrecks, stamping his foot to set time for the drum.

"Zeus!" he exclaimed suddenly.

He swung his whole weight against the steering oar, as a shower of arrows and a dozen javelins twanged aboard out of the fog.

"Row, you Britons, row!"

There were boats alongside, crowded with men. Cæsar had out-guessed him! Straight ahead, moored beam on to the channel, rolled two of the wrecks that had been floated in the night, and only Cæsar would have thought of that! Cæsar, and only Cæsar could have done it! Only in the nick of time Tros saw the movement as they wallowed on the swell, and knew they did not mark the channel but obstructed it.

In another second he would have struck the mud bank to the right of them. Their decks were black with men, and as he swung the helm he caught one glimpse of Cæsar's scarlet cloak, on the left-hand ship. Then the mist, and a hail of arrows whistling through it.

"Row!" he roared, his voice cracking with excitement.

For a marvel his eleven Britons had not fired an arrow. Orwic jumped to the port-side arrow engine just as the bireme's beak struck Cæsar's floated wreck amidships

and the crash threw every rower off his bench.

"Drum! Drum!" Tros thundered. "Back to your benches! Row! For Lud o' Lunden—row!"

HE HEARD the cable break, and through the ghosting mist he saw one hulk go swinging toward the mud to starboard, a volley of arrows from her rattling into the bireme's bulwark, short by the length of the swing.

But Cæsar's hulk was on the ram, transfixed by it and sinking, holed under the bilge. Nine tenths of the way was off the bireme. She was down by the head and refused to steer. The crowded boats were overtaking her. Unless the heave of the groundswell should shake off the wreck from her ram, the game was up!

"Orwic! Lay your arrow-engine forward! Cæsar is on that wreck ahead of us!"

But Cæsar was not. He was over the bireme's bows already like a god out of the opal morning in his scarlet cloak, alone, and beckoning to his men. Orwic fired pointblank at him, and missed with all twelve arrows! Before he could load again there were a dozen legionaries on the bow, shields locked and Cæsar in their midst.

"Row! Row!" Tros thundered.

He did not dare let go the helm. The pursuing boats were thumping through the mist and the air was whistling with arrows. But one of Cæsar's legionaries blew a trumpet blast. The arrows ceased. Then Cæsar's voice, calm, with a hint of laughter:

"Tros! I believe you know me. I advise you to surrender at discretion."

Tros swung the helm. He had a chance yet. Conops hurled his knife at Cæsar, but it clanged on a soldier's shield. Ten Britons clustered beside Orwic, crouching, forgetting bows and arrows, ready with their swords.

"Come on!" cried Orwic, and led them, all leaping from the poop together and rushing forward past the citadel.

Marvel of all marvels, the thirty oarsmen never missed a stroke! The bireme was gaining headway, lurched, shook herself, buried her bow as a heavy wave passed under her stern, shook the wreck free from her ram and crushed it on the down plunge.

The shock of that sent the charging Britons staggering in a heap against the citadel, but the Romans, shoulder to shoulder with locked shields, contrived to keep their footing. Then the oars struck wreckage. An oar broke.

"Drum! Drum!" Tros thundered. "Slow beat! One—two! One—two! Stick to it, you Britons!"

Then, as they cleared the wreckage—

"Conops, take the helm!"

He drew his sword. A Roman hurled a javelin at him, but he dodged it. Orwic and his ten were out of sight beyond the citadel. Tros knew where they were by the eyes of the Romans, who were watching them, alert to repel the expected charge.

Cæsar seemed to be listening for the oar beat of his own boats, but the wind, that had fallen calm, began to shift to westward, blowing the mist along in front of it. A sudden vista between hurrying fog banks revealed the fleet of small boats scattered hopelessly astern.

"Cæsar!" said Tros, laying his left hand on the arrow engine. "I believe you know me. I advise you to surrender at discretion!"

Cæsar laughed. Less than a second later Tros knew why. Orwic chose that instant for the charge. He and his ten Britons leaped up on the bow and hurled themselves against the locked shields, with their own backs protecting Cæsar and his men from arrow-fire.

The Romans were past masters at that kind of fighting. The shields rose and fell almost leisurely, blocking attack, wearing down the adversary. Tros could see Cæsar's lips move as he spoke to his men in low tones, and though they stood the Britons off with shield and sword they made no effort to force them backward off the bow. Orwic's point slew one man, but the locked shields merely closed the gap.

"You are a bold rogue, Tros!" said Cæsar, in his pleasantest, amused voice, that carried with the effortless vibration learned in Rome's schools of oratory.

A Briton hurled a short spear at him, but he ducked it without taking his eyes off Tros.

"Today, it would appear you have the best of it. Tomorrow—who knows?"

Orwic pulled his men off. He knew no Latin, thought all this was talk about surrender. But the Britons were still in the way of the arrow engine's fire. Tros whispered to Conops and signaled, trying to catch Orwic's eye but it was Cæsar

who saw the signal. He made a superb gesture to Orwic, as if about to surrender to him. It deceived Tros for the moment, and it was to him, not to Orwic, that Cæsar spoke:

"I don't doubt, Tros, you are a man of discrimination, who will realize that Cæsar's ransom is worth more to you than Cæsar's dead body. Whereas you are worth nothing to me, dead or alive. And there is no one, Tros, whom I will crucify with less compunction when the proper time shall come!"

His eyes were on Tros, so he did not notice Conops signaling to Orwic. Orwic whispered to his men, but apparently Cæsar was unaware of that, too. He went on speaking:

"I advise you, Tros, to think of your predicament, since it is dangerous to be the enemy of Rome, fatal to be the foe of Cæsar! Farewell!"

Almost without a gesture he turned and dived into the sea. The Britons sprang aside. Tros loosed a flight of arrows, but they clanged against raised shields, piercing them, sweeping down three legionaries.

Two followed Cæsar, plunging after him feet first, but their armor dragged them under. Orwic and his Britons slew the rest, hacking them down as they tried to reform the broken line.

"Arrows! Arrows!" Tros roared, reloading the arrow engine, watching the waves.

Cæsar's bald head, and the scarlet cloak behind it, appeared after a moment. Tros fired, but Cæsar ducked, and all twelve arrows missed.

Cæsar shook off the scarlet cloak and towed it, breasting the waves like a grampus plunging into them and swimming under water when the Britons took pot shots at him, until he disappeared into the mist*.

There was too little sea-room, too much fog and tide, to turn the bireme and pursue him. His cold, amused laugh mocked Tros across unseen waves.

"By Lud of Luden, that's a clever fellow who ought to have been born a Briton!" said Orwic, with the end of a cloth in his teeth as he was bandaging a sword slash in his arm.

"By Jupiter of Rome, he will become one by conquest!" Tros retorted savagely, hating himself, above all hating deathbed prophesies, that undermined a man's nerve, and created indecision.

Prophesy or not, he told himself the gods had delivered Cæsar into his hand. He, Tros, had failed them.

"Conops!" he roared. "The crew are skulking in the forehold. Rouse them with a rope's end! Make sail! Easy now, oars! The wind and tide serve."

* Cæsar was an extraordinarily strong swimmer, and a more than usually bold one, in spite of vicious self-indulgence that should have ruined the physique and nerve of any ordinary man. He often swam wide rivers, whose current was strong enough to hold up the engineers and their pontoons. The best known of his recorded swimming feats is the incident at Alexandria, where he was caught on the mole between forces advancing from either end. He escaped by jumping into a rough sea and swimimng, dodging missiles and dragging his cloak after him, until picked up by a ship.

"FIRE!"

by W. Harald Bagge

A BOOK bearing the title, "Incidents on Land and Water," was published in 1857 and must have been popular for it ran into a ninth edition. Written in the first person, in flowery language, full of retrospective thoughts it is amusing, though very far from humorous, reading. Bearing every evidence of truth it is a most marvelous narrative.

The author, Mrs. D. B. Bates, a native of Kingston, Mass., was married very young to Captain Bates—initials not given—and sailed with him from Baltimore on July 27th, 1850, in the good ship *Nonanton* of Boston, bound for San Francisco with a cargo of Cumberland coal in the hold and a miscellaneous cargo between decks. The coal was wet when loaded. It was not the lady's first voyage and she had with her as "companions a big Newfoundland dog and two goats—the goats to furnish milk."

The days passed uneventfully until in the latitude of Rio de la Plata, when the ship was discovered to be on fire; a terriffic storm was raging and a course was at once

set for the nearest land, the Falkland Islands, eight hundred miles distant.

On the twelfth day after the fire was discovered they made the Falkland Islands; it was blowing a "close-reefer-topsail-breeze" as they anchored until morning in a sheltered cove. There being danger of the cargo exploding Mrs. Bates at once made her husband set her ashore where she took shelter in an abandoned shanty; later being transported to a cattleman's cabin and thence, after a disagreeable experience, to Port Stanly.

After a survey the ship was scuttled, but the fire had made such headway that it was a total loss; only a small part of the cargo was salvaged and sold at auction.

From her description the Falkland Islands were not a desirable place for residence. In about a month they were taken aboard the ship *Humayoon*, from Dundee, McKenzie master, bound for Valparaiso with a cargo of coal, tar and liquors. On the morning of November 25th, 1850, they weighed anchor.

Captain McKenzie, whom they were fated to meet again, "seemed a decent sort of man." They rounded the Horn by the inside passage through the straits of Le Maire, almost within stone's throw of "the veritable Horn"—situated on Hermit Island—and that night another terriffic gale swept them. The next day the ship was found to be on fire, the flames making such rapid headway that they had to take to the boats, taking one of the goats along.

The dog had died, and the other goat had been given to a little girl on the islands. They had saved the goat, but there had been no time to provision the boats—the waves running so high they were in momentary danger of being swamped. This was eighty miles off the Horn. After several perilous hours they were picked up by the ship *Symmetry*, of Liverpool, Thompson master, bound for Acapulco, coal-laden.

This last experience takes fifty pages to tell and Mrs. Bates seems to have acquired a prejudice against coal as a cargo. However they laid to until the *Humayoon* was consumed to the water. They were twelve days out from the Falklands.

Captain Thompson, short of provisions, was anxiously looking for another ship. The ship *Fanchon*, Newburyport, Lunt master, from Baltimore for San Francisco; cargo, Cumberland coal, was spoken and they were transferred, including the goat. The *Fanchon* had left Baltimore three weeks later than the *Nonanton*. As they were being transferred a squall struck them nearly capsizing the boat; Mrs. Bates was terror stricken but Captain Lunt assured her thus:

"Do not be alarmed, there is no danger to be apprehended. We shall soon reach the *Fanchon;* and once on her deck, all trouble and danger will flee away."

This seems to have brought her much cheer—it must have. To have heard the captain of an American clipper speak like that would have been worth three cheers. Later, when she couldn't be made to climb the rope ladder, Captain Lunt's language became more lurid; under its inspiration she was prevailed on to make the attempt successfully and the captain apologized.

On December 25th while at dinner Mrs. Bates was sure that she smelled smoke, coal smoke, but was laughed at as the ship was so well ventilated that there was no possibility of gases forming, but three days later the cargo was found to be on fire and preparations made to face the worst.

Mrs. Bates was prevailed on to "adopt gentlemen's apparel." Captain Lunt furnished: "Black pants, green hunting coat, black satin vest, bosom, à la Byron collar and purple velvet smoking-cap." This gave her quite a bit of moral courage, but the outfit was gladly discarded when they made Sechura Bay, on the coast of Peru, after having navigated the burning ship twelve hundred miles. Mrs. Bates was hauled ashore, "through the foaming surf, minus bonnet, shawl and other feminine apparel."

Two hours later the ship burst into flames and was burned to the water.

There were twenty-six people marooned there; she remarks in parentheses: "Myself numbering the only female." The natives came to them, floating in on what she calls "balsas," and they found there was no water on the coast—she tells later that no rain has fallen there for seven years.

The natives were friendly enough and were prevailed on to bring water but want "mucha pesos." Mrs. Bates traded her goat for water rather than part with too many pesos and thus justified the trade:

"Much as I regretted to part with her, I felt it a duty I owed to her, for past services, to mitigate her woes as far as lay in my power."

Assistance was sent from Payta and they were transported to that port, for which she was very glad, as she explains:

"My habiliments, too, were becoming exceedingly soiled from constant use both day and night."

Here they again met Captain McKenzie of whom she seems to have had a very high regard. But she gave him a parting slam as follows:

"I have never seen or heard from him since, but whenever my thoughts revert to him, the recollection is always flavored with old Scotch whisky."

Although the goat was gone their troubles were not. They obtained passage on the bark *Carbargo*, Barstow master, from Boston for Panama, cargo mules and sheep. Except for some lurid language when a mule got loose and ate off all the other mules' "appendages," the trip is uneventful.

Detained at Panama, owing to the difficulty of securing passage, Mrs. Bates was stricken with Panama fever and, too weak and ill to undertake the trip across the Isthmus, they took passage for San Francisco on the steamer *Republic*, Hudson master. The first night out they were startled by the cry of "Fire!" A panic was averted and the fire put out. A waiter had exploded a cask of alcohol.

"The last day of April, 1851, after an eventful and tedious voyage," they sailed through the Golden Gate. Then follows some rather interesting description of the bay, the city, "Contra Costa" and a little "hamlet" called Oakland. They secured quarters in Happy Valley near Rincon Point and then, three days later:

"The memorable fire of the third of May, 1851, will ever be remembered by all residents of the place at that time with feelings of pain and commiseration. We were startled, between the hours of eleven and twelve, by the familiar cry of 'Fire!'"

The fire did not reach Happy Valley and they took advantage of the opportunity to open a boarding-house but did not make much money. Board was twelve dollars per week.

Seven weeks later they departed for Marysville where the thermometer registered 125 degrees "and men work right along." They tried hotel keeping, but, not being able to stand the strain, gave it up and moved into a little cabin. That night the town of Marysville took fire and was practically destroyed—all but their little cabin. In a week another fire destroyed what was left and had been rebuilt—all but their little shanty.

In 1854 she "bid adeau" to Marysville and, apparently, also to her husband, although throughout the entire book he has not been mentioned, except as captain of the *Nonanton* he is absolutely ignored. As she is about to leave, the town of Marysville is again destroyed by fire.

From her cabin on the *Uncle Sam*, bound for Panama, she overheard a conversation between two sailors:

" 'Dick, what are you laying that extra fire hose for?'

" 'Why didn't you hear? There's a woman aboard who never went to sea but what the ship she was aboard of burnt up before reaching her destination.'

" 'There isn't though!'

" 'Yes there is; and I haven't the least idea the *UncleSam* will ever reach Panama.'

" 'Have you seen her? What does she look like?'

" 'I don't know which one it is; but they say she looks just like any other woman.'

"But the spell was broken; the startling cry of 'Fire!' was not heard."

Still: "Two firemen dropped dead at their post of duty."

SHORE LEAVE

by **Sherman Ripley**

THERE was "Frenchy" Sam, José the Mex,
And Billy Dungaree,
Ivanovitch the Russian Mate
The cabin boy an' me.

We anchored in a small cafe
In sunny old Marsail,
Where dinky little tables take
The place o' bar an' rail.

'Twas Sammy's father's birthday,
An' we pledged with several beers
Till Sam forgot his father's name,
An' busted into tears.

To comfort him we mixed a drink,
An' each man gave his share.
The Mexican had mescal—it
Was fit to curl your hair.

The cabin boy, a little Jap,
Had saki, hot as flame;
Ivanovitch had vodka that
Was wilder than his name.

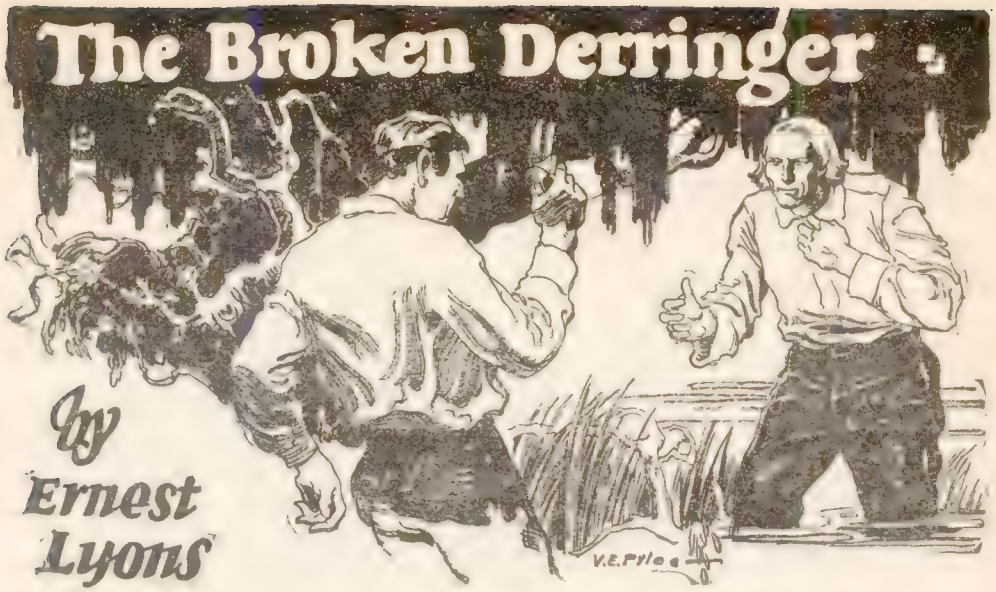
We mixed it with an absinthe base,
An' just a dash o' rye,
And ah! For that amazin' drink
I'd lie me down an' die!

We sampled it a round or two,
Or maybe half a score,
When a Chinese junk came sailin' up
And anchored at the door!

A stranger crew you never saw
To man a Chinese junk,
Than twenty little Johnny Darms—
And all of 'em were drunk!

The last thing I remember was
Their fight with Dungaree,
As they carried out the Russian Mate,
The little Jap, an' me.

The Broken Derringer



by Ernest Lyons

Author of "Ashes of the Sun."

TEN days back, and a bare hundred and eighty miles to the southward, Willem Schlosser had lain off Jewfish Creek at the butt of the Florida Keys, an arm curled around a sponge hook, and both eyes searching the coral through the glass-bottomed well of his dingy. Save that he had been away long enough to do so safely, there was no tangible reason for his return to his old stamping grounds. True enough, a certain physical sentiment he could not well define had a hand in the matter. Again, no little amount of bravado was required, a substance at no time lacking in his aggressive make-up.

He was in fine fettle: More friends to visit! At Bassenger he had spent a pleasant session raking up an old feud between the Yate twins. Fort Drum, scratched to a recent and vivid recollection of Willem Schlosser's presence in the universe, lay seven miles behind him. In much the same fashion in which he had made his trip northward from Manatee, he plowed onward on foot toward the cabin of Philippe.

It was good to crush the bay leaves in his hand after so many years of tar-reek and foul tobacco. Bay leaves meant home to Willem Schlosser just as the ship smells had meant flight. He was a fierce man, this Willem Schlosser, and it did not matter that there was no fire burning for him. No, no woman would ever think of waiting twenty years for him to come home.

Still, this was familiar ground for his feet. By the Lord Harry, he had slashed down this swale before! And many nice little calves had left their mothers' flanks to trot their velvet buttocks down it. These were very thick woods. Willem Schlosser laughed and spat between his teeth when he thought of all the cattle that had been lost in them.

Yes, Philippe would know him. What had he eaten Philippe's pet alligator for; was not that a bond of friendship between them? What other man would have done that much?—such a tough one it had been, and the great hide had brought but ninety cents from so much fighting!

The run he had been following broadened out and seeped into the timber. There was a way around, but not for Willem Schlosser. The nature of the man would admit of nothing but short-cuts. He knew the tortuous creek that ran through the cypress knobs, and took a brute pleasure in forcing it.

Again, the way of the swamp was shorter; and he had many excellent lies to spin in the cabin of Philippe. That is the way of the deep cup. Drinking deep, Willem Schlosser had found many lies, thinking yet to find the great lie in the dregs.

He had heard many sweet stories on the whisky wharves of West End. There was

the tale Peg-Leg Dawson had told of the green ships that ride the Green Sea. He had seen the faces of the tremens; and Joe La Biche once curdled him hours on end off the Isle of Pines with a long song of men who walk the stark decks of *Flying Dutchmen*, their eyes like those of mating dogs.

He threw back his stiff-cropped head and laughed. He was leaving a place where many things had happened. What if he had worn out his welcome there; had he not worn it out here first?

He would tell Philippe a soft tale, one that would raise his hairs!

He strode deeper. This was hard going. Several times he stumbled on submerged roots. The way was blocked with floating and sunken limbs, and a soggy accumulation of fallen moss. There was no lapping of waves; this black water was not like the green of the sea. From the looks of things no one had forced his way through here since he had left.

They lacked guts; they were rotting; their lives were like the depressing silence that hugged the bellies of the black trees. At that, Willem Schlosser was glad it was not night. In his boyhood he had heard the swamp at night. Then it was a thing of noises; the croaking of great black frogs and rumbling challenges of the bull 'gators filled it. There were also the noises that you did not know; they made a man very sick.

There was a shallowing ahead. He had rested there before, and now he plunged forward waist-deep in water. If he remembered rightly it was but a foot deep there, and he could enjoy the pleasure of lifting his thick thighs to air. He sighted the marker, a huge tree with knobby air-roots forming a forty foot circle at its base.

There was another sensualist sunning its coils in the warm water at the foot of the cypress tree. Willem was not at all afraid of moccasins; but he had been twenty years at sea, and it was without thinking at all that he stumbled backward in the water.

The moccasin took itself off, wondering vaguely what new kind of moss this was that had fallen from the tree.

Willem, grinning at himself and at the trees, rose, and shook his body like a wet dog before he fished for the object his hand had touched in the mould.

He was happy when he emerged and gained the other side of the swamp. He had saved maybe twenty minutes walking. Here were cabbage palms. They did not seem much older. He had gained many splinters from shinnying down these very trees.

He was uproariously happy from having conquered the swamp of Tom Walker, and wondered if Philippe would know him as he knocked on the cabin door with the butt of the broken derringer.

"YOU observe, m'sieu, it is broken, this top chamber. It is a very old derringer." Philippe's dark Gallic eyes became softened as you have seen rare tapestry smoothed with the hand.

Schlosser had seated himself. It was a fine play to have changed so that the old mosshead, Philippe, did not recognize him. The rare white-headed frog thought him a stranger. He would wait for his fun—but first a feeler.

"No, I do not remember your face. Age sits heavy on my head. I take it you are a stranger?"

Schlosser grunted assent, trying to repress a smile. How he would entertain this old wreck when the night was ripe!

"I am a creole, m'sieu. Yes, I know the tale of the broken derringer. To no one but a stranger would I tell it, and never if you had not found the broken derringer.

"You found it where? But, pardon, in the swamp of Tom Walker it lay. Certain, I will tell you the tale. They were none of my family, those Monteaus!"

Willem Schlosser crouched in his chair like a cat. Had he spent twenty years hearing lies, not to be able to tell them? He glared at Philippe; he was a very fierce man, this Willem Schlosser, and it pained him to see Philippe had learned to lie.

Philippe rose creakily and turned out the light. Of course he did not recognize Willem Schlosser; but from his action you would think he had been used to dealing with the man.

"The light hurts my eyes, m'sieu—and it is a good tale for the dark.

"A good tale for the dark, large stranger, for it is old like the dark. It is old like the old man I will tell you of, and like the soft night wind that came up from the gulf, bringing a tang of salt marsh in its arms, and rippling the dark surface of the bayou in smooth lazy curves.

"Martens, stranger, like they were drunk, climbed, and fell, and made giddy arcs of

purple over the brown water, and dipped very close at times to the black earth of the clearing, and the chinaberry tree, and the tumbledown shack of the market-hunter.

"I know, for I have often seen the first Monteau thus sitting with his fine-tapered hands folded on his knees. He ought never to have been a market-hunter, stranger. His hair, it was black as a vulture's shoulder; but his face was very old; and no man knew the age of the first Monteau nor whence he came. No, not even the dark, drowned lands where the slough wandered, Styx-like, through the cypresses, nor the bayous, nor the sanctuaries where the mallards fed.

"And he sat thus, stranger, as I have often seen him sitting, on the rickety steps of his cabin in a hunting of other days which belongs only to the very old.

"For it was a young night wind that came up from the gulf and rustled the yellow leaves of the chinaberry tree, a wind that had been young when the first Monteau had been young; and it bore the whistle of wild swans that were once in the rice, velvet of old memories, ripe wine to warm the heart of the aged Monteau.

"Varicolored, like salt of the sea in a flame, was his mind with delicate browns, uncatchable greens and blues of wood-duck, and with streaks of steel for wild geese in a gale.

"These were sweet thoughts of past times, stranger, to have at evening while martens tumbled past the moldering eaves of his old house, bitter sweet, as the parting with his son had been.

"For his son laughed; name of ——, how his son laughed to hear the old market-hunter curse him for killing plumes!

"HERE, large stranger, in this land of the hyacinth marshes came the last Monteau. Stockmen used to sit by their pitch fires at night and tell tales of fierce mongrel dogs that once threw the wild cattle, and of stock-wars, and blood-feuds.

"There they told of the last Monteau, and of how the black carrion birds let steers lie to follow him.

"I should know the whelp of the beauty-loving Monteau of the bayous and rice-fields. Often have I seen him hunting plumes on the edge of the great swamp of Tom Walker.

"There was beauty here then; now we have but the night that follows the blackness of beauty."

Willem creaked in his chair; he was very fierce and sullen.

"Often have I seen him waiting for them to come to their nests. Red and black made purple on the wings of the fish-eating cormorants, those awkward water-turkeys. Night herons, with sleek, black-feathered pompadours on their bluish-gray heads, felt the dusk coming and showed it, stranger, in a restless shifting from one leg to the other.

"A pair of stately sand-hill cranes left the slough and the otter trail to fly with a dull swish over the green island of a bayhead and a palm hummock, a cane slough and a cypress swamp, onward into the eye of the sun.

"Red, searing fingers ran through the sawgrass and cooked the man's neck, burning, but not half so intensely as the thick bubbling weal of the mind that thought of the kites overhead in the blue—following, sailing, waiting, even now.

"Here came a blue and here a white, a frail and graceful crochet plumed white. A bevy into the leaves of the bay, a checkerboard of spray and drab feather, a cordon coming from nowhere, *en masse*. Stragglers, weary, hollow-boned, molting things. Mates, peacock and gosling. The last lone bird, like a wilted white flower with black reedy stems.

"The stump moved.

"And Willem Schlosser," Philippe was defiant in his old memory, "as I killed, there came swooping down the black buzzards that had circled me so long.

"DAY after day I was followed; it is being followed that drives men mad, men that have been alone as the last Monteau.

"There came a cunning and a shrewdness over his mind. Unkempt and disarrayed, wild-eyed and furtive, he shot the black egrets that had trailed him. Carefully, methodically, with a mind for the tight-faced agent of the smuggling ship, he pulled tail feathers from dead buzzards, holding them to the light, admiring their beauty, giving them what he had given the plumes of other days.

"Then there came to him much whispered talk that the first Monteau was in the land of the hyacinth swamps; even at times he thought he saw the face of his father stalking

him. Once there had come his father's voice to him, but he fled and hid.

"Even in his hiding he pulled tail feathers from long-dead and deader buzzards till the rags of him were stuffed full with the noxious plumes of black egrets.

"Some say that it was his madness that drove him to the drab, gray swamp of Tom Walker.

"I was there. He went in the night when the black lumps hovered around his camp and would not fly. He went to rid himself of the old man that followed him and whispered of the night that follows the blackness of beauty.

"Wherever he went there seemed a wraith behind him like the cat that follows the travailed doe to snatch the fawn. The ugly cypress knees and aisles of naked, black boles had a grandeur and a vengeful, cathedral-like solemnity of their own. It was as if the last of the Druids were huddled back to back in a dismal stand, chained by the feet in black pools that reflected their patriarchal beards.

"Old beyond time, and yet seeing end, seemed the gaunt trees, grasping a second of eternity for themselves.

"Moccasins slid with leprous languor from rotted logs.

"Even in my madness I remembered what I sought. As in a dream, came the phlegmatic croaking of frogs, the nasal booms of 'gators. Huge bass and gars, frightened from under, made cracking swirls as I strode waist-deep through the Indian lettuce, on deeper, to the oldest, hollowest Druid of them all.

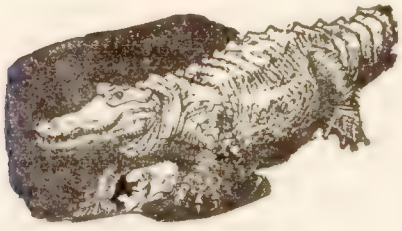
"There I waited for my father, and he was coming. A very old man, he was, but he had braved the swamp of Tom Walker to kill me. It is in our blood; we are that way.

"By the tree where you found the derringer I waited—new it was in those days, bright and shiny as he leveled it at my breast.

" 'Old man,' said I, for I was still crafty, 'you are a coward to shoot me in cold blood. It is better that I shoot myself.'

"He loved me, Willem Schlosser, for he handed me that derringer. Quick as a fox in a trap, I aimed it at his eyes and fired. These are my fingers that are gone, Willem Schlosser; never more can I fire guns. He was a fine old man, my father, but he outwitted poor Philippe.

"Well he knew I would fire the top barrel first, and like a true Monteau he had packed it with mud. Was not that a queer way to reason with his son?"



The Tangled Warp

by Warren Elliot Carleton

MEL FROST jabbed the lance into the gills of the exhausted swordfish. Blood from the thrashing monster tinted pink the water encompassing the dory. Leon Perry reached down from behind Mel and helped him slip the fluke rope over the broad tail of the conquered deep-sea fighter. Head down in the water the three-hundred-pound swordfish hung, to be added to the ninety-six similar cylindrical carcasses already iced down in the hold of the *Alberta Oldham*.

"Pretty stiff fight he put up, Mel," commented Leon, lifting an oar to signal the *Alberta*, ranging near by under the power of her oil-burning engine, that the swordfish was captured and ready to be taken aboard the schooner with the brown dory and its brown-faced occupants. "But the way you spread out that warp when you're playin' a swordfish gives me the creeps. It reminds me too much of—of how Benny died."

Mel, a well built six-footer, stood in the stern, his long legs braced against two strakes to maintain his equilibrium in the Georges Bank ground swell. His quizzical dark-blue eyes took in the coiled warp, or harpoon line, on which he had played the swordfish after Cap'n Dan Oldham had darted the lily iron into the broad bluish back under the curved dorsal fin when the *Alberta*, with muffled engine, stole up on the unsuspecting, basking quarry.

Mel had never felt sorry for Leon before, but the dejected look in that thin, hawk-nosed, hatchet face of his dorymate kindled genuine sympathy for him in Mel's honest, forgiving soul. After all, Benny Frost's death might have been an accident. If it were not, and Leon was Benny's murderer—well, Leon's conscience would betray him in due time. Murder will out. Just now he had no proof against Leon, no reason for denying him his sympathy.

For Mel's younger brother, Benny, had been Leon's dorymate on the previous swordfishing trip of the *Alberta* that summer. Like Mel, Benny was notoriously careless in spreading out the warp at his feet when he was playing a swordfish. If Benny had been alone in the dory when the accident happened, Mel would have been satisfied that his entanglement in the warp and his subsequent drowning had been accidental. But Cap'n Dan Oldham had lost a lone doryman in a fog the previous summer. His overturned dory had been found drifting miles out at sea. So Cap'n Dan refused to allow a dory to leave the *Alberta* without its having two occupants, for he had never before lost a man at sea in his forty years of swordfishing.

The dory manned by Leon and Benny had put out in a fog to pick up a swordfish that had just been ironed, the position of which was marked by a black keg floating on the surface, to which the warp was fast,

the sounding swordfish at the other end of the stout manila line. The *Alberta* left the dory astern and started to range for more game, Cap'n Dan depending on his uncanny accuracy in locating a dory in a fog when he was ready to pick the little boat up.

The dory had not been out long when vibrant blasts of a small tin horn penetrated the thick weather. Cap'n Dan raced toward those piercing shrieks with opened engine, the crew descending the ratlines from the foremast head to a lower altitude, from which they could see farther in the fog.

But when the dory took shape in the milk-white vapor, Leon alone sculled up to the schooner. In the bottom of the dory lay the crumpled body of Benny, the warp caught around his legs.

After a long tussle, Leon explained, he had succeeded in hauling Benny back into the dory. Then he cut the swordfish loose. Benny was dead; he had been dragged into water deep enough to drown a porpoise. Then Leon had blown the little tin horn. He was nerve-shattered after his ordeal. It was a horrible experience. At that time Mel had neither the heart nor actual proof to accuse Leon, even though there were doubts in his mind whether or not Benny's drowning were entirely accidental.

For Benny and Mel had intended, after one more trip that summer, to buy the *Alberta*. Cap'n Dan, approaching his sixty-fifth birthday, planned to retire as soon as he could find a customer for his schooner. He had the best crew in the entire fleet of swordfishing vessels that cruise off Georges every summer. For several years he had been high-liner in the Boston and Gloucester markets.

But when he offered the schooner for sale, Leon announced his intention of buying her the same day Mel and Benny made him an offer. Cap'n Dan wished to show no favoritism. Neither of the bidding parties could pay spot cash the five thousand dollars he asked for her.

So Cap'n Dan told the three bidders—

"The first party that makes an initial payment of two thousand dollars gets the *Alberta*."

That settled it.

Benny and Mel managed to scrape up five hundred dollars apiece. They tried to raise the other thousand at the banks of Freetown, the *Alberta's* southeastern Massachusetts home port. But they were refused. So Benny and Mel were hustling to accumulate the other thousand from their fishing shares that summer.

And so was Leon. He had about one thousand dollars saved, and was racing Benny and Mel to corral the other thousand. But against the two brothers he was laboring under a handicap. Their pooled shares would be double his. And he wanted the *Alberta* as badly as they did. Such an opportunity to buy a stanch schooner and acquire a crackajack crew would never come again.

Mel had always distrusted Leon. And that distrust weighed heavily against Leon when Mel, lying in his bunk nights, reviewed the untimely passing of his attractive brother, a handsome lad not thirty when he died, with all Mel's courage and honesty, the favorite of the crew. Mel was thirty-two.

So with Benny gone and Mel his heir, the elder brother was still racing with Leon to make the initial payment to Cap'n Dan and acquire the title to the *Alberta*. Cap'n Dan, protesting that their rivalry for possession of the *Alberta* should make no difference in their friendship, had made Leon Mel's dorymate when Benny died. Cap'n Dan was a man of peace. He had, after studying Benny's death, declared to Mel that his drowning appeared to be quite accidental.

"Many a swordfisherman has gone to glory that way," insisted the skipper. "An' you've got to admit, Mel, that you 'n' Benny always was careless 'bout handlin' the warp. Easiest thing in the world for you to step into its coils an' be carried overboard by the swordfish, the way you spread it out on the bottom o' the dory."

And now, as the *Alberta* bore down on the dory, Mel saw his companion in a new light. That look in Leon's sharp black eyes was not feigned. It was an appealing, eager look; the eyes of a man who is trying to convince an unbelieving world that in spite of circumstantial evidences against him he is not guilty; that circumstances have forced him to be misunderstood, unjustly maligned.

"Leon," Mel spoke with determination, "if you think I've been doubtful about how Benny died, you're right. But I've been wrong, Leon. We'll play fair to get the *Alberta*, An' I want you to know that whoever gets it, I'm your friend."

He offered Leon his hand.

The appealing look in Leon's eyes changed to one of surprize, then rejoicing. He reached out and warmly clasped Mel's hand. But he was apparently so choked that he could not speak. Mel, too, felt tears welling up in his eyes.

"Hooray!" shouted Cap'n Dan from the port rail of the schooner, which was standing by to take them aboard. "I'd rather see that than the market price o' swordfish go up to fifty cents a pound!"

THAT night when Mel went on deck to relieve the skipper's watch, he found Cap'n Dan squatting on the wheelbox, a coil of warp in his hand, over which he was busily engaged fashioning what to Mel looked like a lariat. The fog was thick, and in the dim light of the lantern suspended from the main boom the short, rotund figure of Cap'n Dan much resembled that of an inquisitive bear. He was so occupied with his chubby arms and hands over the lariat that he did not hear Mel's approach.

"What you doin', Skipper—makin' a shark snare?" asked Mel.

The shipper's round face looked up in surprize, its bushy gray mustache dripping with the heavy fog, his yellow sou'wester and oilskins gleaming in the eerie light. He coiled the warp over his arm and slung it on to the deck house.

"Oh, jest whilin' away time," replied Cap'n Dan, rising from his seat. "Ain't much use keepin' up a watch. We never done it in the old days. If a liner runs us down, she runs us down—that's all there is to it. I——"

As if challenging his utterance, from the fog off the port side of the schooner sounded a distant *oo-oo-ooh.* Cap'n Dan looked at the compass and turned on a small electric light in the binnacle to study its card better.

"I vum, now!" the skipper declared "That's the fust steamer I've heard on my watch. Bad night for 'em, too."

Quietly he and Mel listened for the repetition of that warning blast. Somewhere out there in the fog each knew a big steamship was churning across Georges Bank on her way to Europe.

"I don't like that steamer," declared Cap'n Dan after several minutes' silence. "She ain't whistlin' often enough. I wouldn't care if she didn't slow down, if she'd only keep on whistlin'. How in —— does she s'pose we're goin' to get her course if she don't whistle once in a while?"

"Had I better call up all hands?" asked Mel a bit nervously, sharing with the skipper the awful suspense of waiting in vain for the belated whistle blast.

"You might as well. Lord knows what's facin' us."

Mel ran to the forecastle hatch and shouted down:

"Here comes a big one, boys! Ain't whistlin'. Get up on deck—quick!"

The scuffling that broke loose in the forecastle informed Mel that his shipmates were rolling out of their bunks, drawing on sea boots, and scrambling to ascend the ladder to deck, taking no chances on being caught below deck if the big liner should chance to run down the seventy-foot schooner. Mel hastened back to the binnacle and joined the skipper in listening for the second whistle.

"Watch that compass. I'm goin' to start the engine," the skipper, making a dive for the cabin, instructed Mel.

On deck came the men from the forecastle, clustering around the binnacle, a silent, apprehensive group facing together the imminent peril hovering off to port in the opaque fog. From the cabin sounded the sucking gasps of the engine, and its exhaust spluttered under the stern. The skipper dashed up on deck.

Cap'n Dan grasped the wheel, and the *Alberta* lurched ahead.

"Where d'you s'pose that steamer is?" asked Leon excitedly, edging closer to the skipper. Leon had been run down once off Grand Bank. He made no effort to conceal his nervousness when a liner was in the foggy vicinity of the *Alberta.*

"How the —— do I know?" shot back Cap'n Dan, still panting from the exertion of his sprints to and from the cabin. "She may be fur, or she may be close. If she don't whistle——"

Oo-oo-oo-ooh! It sounded almost over their heads, so close that the *Alberta* fairly vibrated, as if shuddering like a living thing at the horrible proximity of that unearthly bellow. And the towering prow of that onrushing immensity of steel bore down straight for the little *Alberta!*

Cap'n Dan, his fat face livid, almost stood on his head in his effort to sheer the

schooner out of the sea tyrant's course. Mel, grasping a shroud of the mainmast, strove to kick off his cumbersome sea boots. He succeeded in getting one off, but the other stuck. His eyes staring fascinated at the approaching bow light steadily nearing the schooner at a locomotive clip, he waited breathless and utterly paralyzed for what he had often heard Leon describe vividly as the sensations of being run down at sea—the shattering of wood, the shriek of rent timbers mingled with the muffled cries of human beings swept to eternity in one direful instant.

But there was only one cry—the terrified wail of a man who dashed past him and gathered into his arms one of those little black buoy kegs used for marking the position of an ironed swordfish in the water. And that man rushed toward Mel as if bent on leaping from the schooner into the sea.

Mel's eyes left the bow lights and onrushing prow of the liner. He felt ashamed that he had hesitated in that crucial moment. Letting go of the shroud, he became himself again—the Mel Frost renowned in the fishing fleet as a man who never hesitated, a deep-water sailor from a deep-water ancestry who knew no fear and could be depended upon to act in the direst crisis.

He lunged at the fellow with the keg and tumbled with him on to the deck. The man under him fought, bit, kicked, a madman whose wits had been shattered by the terrible tension of waiting for Fate to cast the dice of safety or oblivion. Wrestling with the insane one who would have cast himself straight into the path of that liner, Mel could hear the *Alberta's* faithful little engine chugging heroically to sheer wide of the monster that seemed to be pursuing her as a hawk swoops down on a defenseless sparrow.

Under the two strugglers the deck rose in the great wave cut by the fast traveling liner. Water smashed over the port rail, surging around them in a comber that swept the deck, carrying them, wrenching and tearing at each other, to the after deck. The schooner pitched and tossed a few seconds as if she would founder. The whistle of the liner roared off the starboard quarter, and its prolonged blast diminished in the fog.

Cap'n Dan and Hiram Gardner the cook tore the two fighters apart. The rest of the crew gathered around them.

"The —— of a time to be fightin'!" panted the skipper, Mel's big shoulder clutched in his huge tawny hand. "You should be thankin' the Lord, like I am, that we wasn't run down. My God, that was the closest call *I* ever got!"

Then for the first time Mel recognized his opponent, the man he had saved from hurling himself into the path of the liner in his panic. It was Leon Perry.

Leon, quivering and gasping, looked shamefacedly around him.

"It wasn't a fight, skipper," Mel started to explain. "I was——"

"You're —— right it wa'n't a fight!" put in Hiram the cook. "I seen it all with my own eyes. What Mel done was to save Leon's life, that't what!"

"I—I cal'late I lost my head," confessed Leon, looking with popping eyes around him as if he were just coming out of an anesthetic. "I've been run down once; I thought I was ag'in. I remember pickin' up the keg, and then—after that, everything's sorter hazy like."

"He started to pitch himself head-first over the rail," Hiram augmented, "but Mel grabbed him. The wust thing a man can do when he's bein' run down is to leave the schooner."

Leon held out his hand to Mel, while tears streamed down his gaunt cheeks.

"Mel," the angular fisherman sobbed, "it's no more'n right for me to do *you* a favor now. I won't buy the *Alberta*." He addressed the skipper. "She's Mel's, an' I'll be —— proud to sail under him—if he'll take me."

THE remainder of the night and during the brightening hours of early morning, Mel could not sleep. He lay wide awake in his bunk in the peak of the *Alberta*, listening to the swish of the bilge water under the forecastle and the snores of his slumbering shipmates in neighboring bunks.

Leon's renunciation of all claims to ownership of the *Alberta* and his overwhelming gratitude for Mel's saving him in his mad attempt to leap from the schooner convinced Mel that all these years he had misunderstood his shipmate. He had no reason to suspect Leon of foul play in connection with Benny's drowning. The same

thing might have happened to Mel himself; he, like Benny, was so careless in handling the warp. He would probably never have suspected Leon had it not been for a certain dislike Mel had always harbored for his hatchet-faced dorymate.

Yet that dislike had resulted from the mere fact that Mel didn't like hatchet-faced people. But to suspect a shipmate of murder for no other reason than that he didn't like his looks was eminently unjust. And if Leon had caused further suspicion because he also wished to buy the *Alberta*, his renunciation of all claim to her more than convinced Mel that the purchase of the schooner was secondary in his desires to his own integrity. No man with Leon's sense of honor was to be suspected of treachery. He had not given up that hope of some day skippering the *Alberta* without a sacrifice; Mel was quite sure that he wouldn't have done it himself, even if Leon had saved his life under similar circumstances.

So when the cook sang out, "Let's have a bite!" and all hands rolled sleepily out of their bunks for breakfast, Mel, rubbing his eyes that had been unrefreshed by sleep, took his customary place beside Leon at the table and engaged him in brisk and friendly conversation as he had never before been wont to do.

Breakfast eaten, all hands except Hiram ascended the ladder to deck. There they iced down the six swordfish captured the previous day, bringing the total up to one hundred and two. The *Alberta* was not due in the Boston market for another week; it looked as if Cap'n Dan would be high-liner again this year.

Leon and Mel had never been so chummy before, and Cap'n Dan smiled with apparent relish that his effort to cement the ties of friendship between them had at last met with success; also that the future ownership of the *Alberta* had been settled without animosity. The two dorymates took their seats in the second crosstree of the foremast head, Sim Hoyt, mastheader, standing above them on the tiptop crosstree, and Antone Costa and Frank Cook seated on the other crosstree below them.

The fog had cleared away. In the distance twinkled the sails of three other vessels of the swordfishing fleet. The July sun shone dazzlingly, not a cloud in the sky. Like an infinite circular mirror the smooth, glassy Atlantic surrounded them, its surface broken only by the wake of the schooner, nosing ahead slowly under her engine power, and dark blotches that marked the presence of schools of small mackerel and herring. Mother Carey's chickens glided like swallows astern, scooping up the refuse from the forecastle which Hiram had just thrown overboard.

"There's one!" shouted Sim from his perch above the other four in the crosstrees. "Port! Port!"

Mel's keen vision made out the curved dorsal fin some distance off the port bow. It looked like a big fellow, too. Lazily he floated, his broad back almost exposed, his tail tip projecting, to all appearances as motionless as the dorsal fin, yet causing a noticeable wake in the ground swell.

"Hag" Bodell at the wheel got the *Alberta* around quickly, and she raced toward the "finning" swordfish.

"Steady!" shouted Sim, and, repeating the mastheader's command, Hag spun the wheel.

The swordfish, as if aware that danger was approaching, suddenly shot ahead and dived out of sight. Hag, noticing the disappearance of the quarry, slowed down the engine, while the eyes of the five in the foremast crosstrees studied the smooth surface. A miniature waterspout burst from the ocean off the starboard bow. In its center the big swordfish shook himself, dropped back in the broken ground swell, and disappeared.

Cap'n Dan looked up from the "pulpit" at the tip of the bowsprit, against the iron hand rail of which he leaned, the fifteen-foot harpoon pole slightly upraised clutched in both hands.

"He's breechin'—likely to be wild!" the skipper shouted to the masthead men. "Keep yer eyes peeled for him. He'll come up ag'in!"

"Port—hard aport!" yelled Leon, pointing excitedly.

The uproar that followed in the masthead was loud enough to warn a swordfish two miles away that eight human beings were after him, thirsting for his blood. Hiram, in white cap and apron, had taken his position on deck close to the coiled warp and the black keg which it was his duty to get overboard after the swordfish had been ironed and was bolting for the depths of the ocean.

"Steady!" shouted Sim.

Straight ahead plowed the schooner. Hag slowed the engine which he had opened up when the swordfish made its third appearance. In spite of the racket in the masthead, the swordfish floated sluggishly directly in the path of the *Alberta*.

His left hand firmly gripping the pole, the palm of the right hand closed over the butt opposite the downward-pointing arrow of the sharp little "lily iron" harpoon, Cap'n Dan stood in position to strike the unsuspecting swordfish. The victim moved slightly; the pulpit was almost directly over him. With all his strength the skipper hove the pole at the iridescent bluish back below.

Quash! The iron struck. In a white swirl the bluish back and flashing tail darted under water with lightning rapidity. Over the boiling water sped the schooner.

Hiram acted quickly. He seized the flexible warp which ran along the starboard side of the schooner, and wrenched it loose from its fastening on the foremast shrouds. One end of the warp was attached to the lily iron, now embeded in the swordfish; the other end of its hundred-fathom length was fastened to the buoy keg. Holding the warp taut to make sure that the lily iron was "toggled," or firmly planted in the swordfish, he paid out fathom after fathom of its length and ended by throwing overside the remaining coils and the keg.

Leon and Mel were already descending the ratlines from the masthead. Hag had drawn up the brown dory dragging astern. Leon jumped into the dory first, and sat with the oars in the bow thwart. Mel followed him, taking his customary place in the stern. Leon hauled in the painter which Hag tossed him, and rowed out to the agitated keg. Leaving the dory astern, the *Alberta* started to range for more game.

"That's a pretty big fish, Mel," commented Leon, rowing with long, powerful strokes toward the keg. "Looks to me a good 'eal like the skipper ironed him pretty close to the head."

Near the keg the surface of the oily ground swell was suddenly cleft by a gliding scimitar, and around the keg like a giant revolving knife blade darted the swordfish, his dorsal fin projecting a foot or so above the V-shaped ripple that trailed it.

"My ——, we sure are in for it now!" exclaimed Mel, standing in the stern and studying the furious antics of the streaking monster. "That swordfish is crazy as a coot—ironed in the head is right. Don't bring up the dory too close—yet."

Leon obediently backed water while the swordfish continued his skimming lightly just below the surface in ever-widening circles. The speed with which that great cylindrical body shot through the water was positively uncanny. No porpoise leaping to gain the fascinating bows of a distant ship ever moved faster; a torpedo would have been left a mile astern in the space of five minutes on a straightaway.

"——, look at him travel!" exclaimed Leon, turning the dory and gazing in rapture at the marvelous exhibition of speed the wounded swordfish presented to his spectators.

"Back up to the keg," ordered Mel.

Leon hesitated before entering the circumference of the furious creature's activity.

"Back fast—hurry up!" insisted Mel irritably. "We can't watch that critter all day. It's up to us to ketch him."

Leon backed the dory swiftly up to the keg. Mel reached over the gunwale and took it aboard. Quickly he stuck the roller into the stern tholepin hole, and over it began hauling in the line. Several fathoms of slack warp he coiled at his feet, and then met the great force of the swordfish tightening the line from its opposite extremity.

The problem confronting Mel was how to force the swordfish to dive into deep water. Just how he could accomplish this, he didn't exactly know. He had never played a crazy swordfish before, but he knew, from tales told by veteran swordfishermen, that they are the most dangerous of all creatures in the ocean, not even excepting a harpooned thresher shark.

Ordinarily a swordfish is too careful of his sword to challenge deliberately the man hauling him in the dory. The swordfish has no teeth; he bolts his food whole. And that food usually consists of herring and mackerel he has killed by threshing his sword from side to side like a club when he glides foraging through a school of small fish.

But Mal knew a crazy swordfish would not be so conservative of his sword. He also knew that if his dory was "punched"

by the swordfish bolting upward from deep water, the damage thus wrought, although it would imperil his life and Leon's, would be considerably less than the swordfish might inflict if he attacked the dory by charging at it along the surface. He had heard of dories that have been smashed to kindling-wood by surface attacks of swordfish.

So Mel, knowing that the cardinal virtue of a swordfisherman is his ability to hold the warp taut without pulling out the iron, held stubbornly to the line, nor would he give way an inch. Stern first the swordfish towed the dory after it, while the crazed monster plowed along the surface, its strength apparently undiminished by its exertions.

"——, he's bound to tire himself out in short order!" Leon remarked behind Mel. "He can't keep that up long. No critter that swims or walks ever could."

Mel did not answer, but held to the line while the dory followed the darting swordfish. Sometimes when the creature sheered off to one side, Mel gained a few feet of warp, which he added to the coils at his feet.

"My ——!" he panted, the dory slapping over the ground swell like a water plane. "I never did see a swordfish like that. Hold up an oar, Leon. I cal'late we'd better have the schooner come back an' the skipper put another iron into him."

The *Alberta* had ranged away until she was now almost on the horizon. Leon raised an oar, and was holding it up when Mel shouted:

"Stand by with the extra twenty-five fathoms, Leon! He's soundin'!"

AS SUDDENLY as he had executed his insane spirals along the surface, the swordfish dived straight down toward the ocean bottom. Mel's strategy of keeping the warp taut had apparently worked. Tortured by the agonizing barb in his back so close to his head that it had somehow distorted his brain, the swordfish, probably by instinct, suspected that the bright sunlight was directly responsible for his torment. Whatever prompted that sudden plunge, it was just what Mel had tried, by the only method he knew, to force his quarry to do.

Leon snatched up the extra twenty-five fathoms of line which every dory of the swordfish fleet carries, and reached around Mel's legs to make it fast to the warp. For at the rate the swordfish was traveling, he would soon haul out all the warp and Mel would be forced to throw over the keg. And if the swordfish towed the keg under water, the pressure would burst it. The depth was at least one hundred fathoms there. The extra length of line would prevent the fishermen from losing the swordfish if the keg should burst.

"Hurry up!" exhorted Mel as the remaining warp shot through his fingers.

"All right!" answered Leon, rising behind Mel. "She's fast!"

Mel's eyes had been on the swordfish. They glanced swiftly at the rest of the warp and the additional twenty-five fathoms of line lying at his feet. Still the warp shot through his hands, his calloused flesh tingling with the friction. His eyes widened with horror. The warp was looped around his legs!

He cried out, while the warp shot downward in the seemingly endless dive of the crazy swordfish.

"Leon—quick—the warp—cut it loose!" he screamed.

Leon's hand shot past him, the blade of his opened pocketknife flashing toward the imperilling looped line.

"Quick!" pleaded Mel. "Cut it! To —— with the swordfish!"

Was Leon paralyzed? His hand moved slowly as Death itself. Impatiently Mel dropped the paying-out warp and reaching around, pulled loose the sharp knife that was stuck under the port gunwale for such emergencies as this. He reached over to cut the line.

"Look out!" shouted Leon in his ear. "Look at the warp! It's slack! That swordfish is comin' up at the dory!"

A glance proved that Leon's warning was timely. Alongside the dory the warp hung limp in the water. Mel heard the chugging of the *Alberta's* engine. The schooner was coming up in response to Leon's signal, the upraised oar.

Mel could visualize the upward charge of the agonized swordfish. He had seen too many dories punched to take chances on being caught in the vicinity of the warp. For usually it is the torturing warp which the swordfish follows upward, mistaking it for the instrument that directly causes his pain rather than the lily iron buried in his flesh.

Not stopping even to cut loose the tangled coils of the warp about his legs, Mel started for the bow. But impeded by the rope binding his shins, he collided with Leon, who had been standing after his warning cry as if stagestruck, probably waiting for Mel, more experienced fisherman that he was, to make the first move. Or Leon's hesitancy might have been sheer panic; Mel never knew.

With a little cry, Leon teetered for a second, and Mel, losing his balance completely, due to the binding of his legs, leaned helplessly against his dorymate. The dory lurched again. Mel felt himself falling, Leon under him. They landed on the bottom of the dory, Mel's arm, with its hand still clutching the knife, pinned under Leon's back.

Leon screamed, but Mel, not heeding his outcry, wrenched his arm loose and quickly got to his knees, the knife still clutched in his hand. He severed the warp with a rapid slash, then noticed that the warp hanging over the side of the dory was slack. With a quick haul he tested the warp. The swordfish had broken loose; evidently it had been a "loose iron", and the plunging of the harpooned victim had loosened the hold of the barb in its back.

"——, Mel, you've knifed me!" gasped Leon, writhing on the bottom of the dory.

Mel dropped the knife and stared horrified at the blood trickling from under Leon's back and forming a crimson puddle around his body. He bent down, and started to roll Leon over on his stomach so that he could examine the wound and stanch, if possible, the flow of blood.

"Keep your hands off me! Don't touch me! You've done enough!" Leon screamed reproachfully. "You—you needn't 'a' knifed me to git the *Alberta*. I told you she's yourn—for all me. An' if you knifed me to pay for Benny——"

"I didn't knife you on purpose, Leon!" Mel shouted. "It was an accident, I swear to God 'twas! We fell—the knife was in my hand—and you fell on it!"

"That's the lie you'll tell to git outen it," sneered Leon, bitter and revengeful in his agony. "You was afraid I'd go back on my word an' git the *Alberta*. An' you've had it in for me ever since Benny was lost."

A queer gurgling noise came from Leon's throat. He tried to speak, but no sound other than the gurgling came. With horror Mel stared into the blazing eyes of his dorymate—the rival whose agony he so unintentionally had caused.

While he stared helplessly at the wounded man, the gurgling grew fainter. Leon's face was livid, his mouth distorted with a frightful expression—that of a fish out of water, eyes bulging, while his body raised itself with the sudden tension of a bent bow.

The *Alberta* chugged nearer, and her engine ceased its grinding a few fathoms from the dory Excited voices shouted from her deck. Water swished ahead of her prow.

With a violent convulsion Leon's tense body relaxed, and he fell back limp, his yellow oilskins reddened in the widening crimson puddle. Mel looked for his knife. Leon's pocketknife lay where the wounded man had dropped it. Mel's was about a foot from it. Its blade was smeared with blood. So was Mel's right hand.

Of course it was accidental. Cap'n Dan knew Mel too well to think, even, that he would resort to foul play, even to avenge Benny. If he had only had presence of mind enough to drop the knife when he fell. But his mind had been wholly on disengaging the warp so that the swordfish would not haul him overboard. Cap'n Dan would *know* it was accidental. The crew would know ——

——! It looks like Mel's done it!"

It was the skipper's voice. Mel glanced up from the body of Leon. Above him rose the side of the schooner. Into the dory leaped the skipper, surprisingly active for one of his years. He stood in the bow facing Mel, Leon's body lying between them. In Cap'n Dan's round face his brown eyes blazed with reproach like an owl's. He knelt over Leon and listened for heartbeats. After a tense moment,while the silent crew looked on from the rail overhead, the skipper slowly rose to his feet.

"Leon's dead," he announced solemnly. "Mel, I'm powerful sorry, but the chances are you'll get the electric chair for this when we get ashore. We'll have to be witnesses, me an' my crew, and we saw you through the glass when you attacked Leon. Yes, by ginger, an' we saw your knife flashin' in the sun—didn't we, boys?"

"Sure did! We seen it all!" came the chorus from the rail overhead.

"I—I didn't attack him!" Mel defended himself. "I did have my knife out, an' so did Leon have his—to cut the warp when it

got looped round my legs. The swordfish charged the dory, an' I tried to reach the bow thwart. I bumped into Leon, an' we went down together, my knife under him. It was accidental. He fell on my knife."

Cap'n Dan picked up the two knives and examined them. "How'll you explain to the authorities that your knife was pointin' up when Leon fell on it?" he scoffed. "Knives don't point up 'less they're steered."

"I can't explain it," admitted Mel, baffled by the skipper's question. "It just happened, that's all."

The skipper sniffed contemptuously.

"If you can convince the court o' that, Mel," he said, "it's more'n you can me." He eyed Mel's legs. The coiled warp which had bound them had fallen around Mel's ankles, now that the tension was removed. In the excitement Mel had neglected to kick off the loose rope.

Quickly the skipper dropped to his knees and examined the looped warp around Mel's feet. He rose with a bound.

"Where—what became—did you cut the swordfish loose?" the skipper asked excitedly.

"Yes," replied Mel, "after he'd changed his mind about punchin' the dory and had tore himself loose from the iron."

"An' you pulled the knife out o' Leon to cut the fish loose?"

"I didn't pull the knife out. It was——"

"Look—off to weather!" shouted Hiram from the deck of the schooner, pointing excitedly.

All eyes followed the cook's rigid arm. But Mel was not interested in what he saw. For it was only the quivering body of the dead swordfish, floating belly-up on the surface.

But after taking one look, the skipper bent over Leon's body and flipped it over on its stomach. He examined the gaping wound in the small of Leon's back, pulling away the oilskins and clothing underneath until the flesh was exposed.

Mel saw something protruding from the wound while the skipper was engaged in his examination. Cap'n Dan pulled it out, and held it before his eyes. It was a dark object about eight inches long. Although it was smeared with blood, Mel recognized it—and he understood. It was the end of the sword with which the swordfish had punched the dory.

"By crinus, that accounts for it!" exclaimed Cap'n Dan. "The dory *was* punched, an' so was Leon. An' the sword broke off."

Water was trickling through the small hole where the sword had crashed through. Leon's body had lain so close to the hole that only a little water had seeped in. The hole itself was only a narrow slit, not more than an inch and a half wide and less than a half-inch thick. The splintered wood had settled back into the hole with the motion of the water, and was rapidly swelling.

Some of the crew had launched another dory, and they brought up the body of the swordfish. The end of the sword, true to the skipper's prediction ,was broken off.

Cap'n Dan broke the silence that he and Mel had observed since making the discovery of how Leon really met his death.

"There's something almighty queer about this," he pondered. "You see, Mel, that warp tangled around your legs was ketched in a half hitch exactly like that found on your brother Benny. I'm quite a hand with knots. Just step out o' them coils, will yuh?"

Mel accommodated him by stepping out of the looped warp at his feet. The skipper held it up.

"See that half-hitch?" he asked Mel, holding the knot in question before Mel's eyes. The warp had not only been looped around Mel's legs; it had actually been tied there, drawn tight in such a knot as sailors use for making the painters of small boats fast to wharf posts.

"No knot like that ever was tied by accident," the skipper went on. "I came to that conclusion after I'd studied it out on deck, Mel—just before that liner gave us such a close shave. Leon Perry tied that knot, just like he tied it round Benny. And if that swordfish hadn't come for the dory, I reckon you'd 'a' followed Benny overboard, too.

"Perhaps," the old sea dog mused, "Benny sent that swordfish himself to show up Leon an' save you. I'll say the swordfish made a clean job of it! But anyhow, Mel, I cal'late you needn't wait for makin' your whole first payment on the *Alberta* before takin' possession of her. You'll be her skipper next trip."

And the howl of approval that rose from the schooner's deck assured Mel that the crack swordfishing crew of the whole New England fleet was included in the transaction.

Calvert of Allobar

A Four-Part Story—Part 1. by Robert Simpson

Author of "Neither Money Nor Power," "Bad Business," etc.

The street of the family of N'ri is the street of the gods and the makers of kings.—*An Ibo proverb.*

CHAPTER I

A THIN BLUE LIGHT.

AT FIRST, Calvert thought the tall, near-naked figure was rising like a bronze jinn out of the glass at his elbow. So, with an absurdly quizzical amazement upon his face, he thrust out a large, lean and uncertain hand to push the glass farther across the little wicker table, so that his bleared eyes might have an opportunity to enjoy a better perspective. This movement, however, did not improve matters, and Calvert came all the way out of his alcoholic slumber with a jerk.

"Boy!"

The hoarse thunder of the American trading agent's voice echoed throughout the length and breadth of the little Oil Rivers trading station and shattered the quiet tropical evening as ruthlessly as a stone might shatter a pane of glass.

But the figure before Calvert's eyes was not in the least affected by the noise. Without appearing to move, it had simply gone out to the end of the oil wharf, where it remained in the same statuesque attitude, altogether oblivious of Calvert's astonishment.

Then, as the scuff of a naked foot rounded the corner of the veranda, and a stunted, flat-faced Kroo-boy came and stood obediently beside Calvert's chair, the trading agent drew the back of his hand slowly across his mouth and grinned. It was a grin of profound, if sickly, relief, and the cold sweat on Calvert's forehead almost warmed up again.

"You look um?" he asked the Kroo-boy, and pointed past a veranda upright toward the outermost edge of the ramshackle little wharf that projected itself shakily into the muddy waters of Allobar Creek.

"I look um, sah," the Kroo-boy answered mechanically.

Calvert was glad to hear it. For a minute or so he had been afraid he had been seeing things that were not there to see; and now he leaned forward in his chair to be quite sure the steward was not agreeing with him simply to keep out of trouble.

"Which man he be?" Calvert asked, and there was a wholly unconscious note of awe in his voice.

"I no *savez*, sah."

"Which place he come?"

"He be Ibo man, sah."

"Ibo."

Calvert repeated the tribal name without an interrogation point. Evidently the information needed no explanation as far as he was concerned. But presently he grunted—

"Calvert of Allobar," copyright, 1925, by Robert Simpson.

"From Asaba?"
"I no *savez*, sah."
"Nishi?"
"I no *savez*, sah."
"Hunh."

Calvert paused a moment or two, then with a sloppily indifferent wave of his hand, dismissed the Kroo-boy who lost no time in returning to the galley where he always felt more at home when Calvert had reached the bath-towel stage. The trading agent leaned as far forward in his chair as he could and peered with a shrewd kind of drunken interest at the starkly magnificent figure on the wharf.

Undoubtedly the sunset was primarily responsible for arousing Calvert's interest in the man. The sun, not unlike a huge orange, was dropping out of sight behind the eternal ring of drab-green mangroves, and directly in the center of the saffron ball, almost as if he were a part of it, the bronze-colored body of the native, clothed only in the simple majesty of a loin cloth, stood out in perfect silhouette, splendidly erect, and motionless as any sculpture.

Calvert was a fool, as he would have been the first to admit, and his name was utterly without honor on Allobar Creek. But he was yet something of the artist he had hoped to be, and his large, lean right hand began to make motions in the air that suggested he was sketching the picture before him.

This, in due course, brought his attention to the native's ankles, the right one particularly, which boasted an anklet of some sort, and Calvert was still trying to determine in his befuddled way the why and the wherefore of the thing, when the sun plunged out of sight and the myriads of winking fireflies suddenly pricked the dark with their tiny pin-points of light.

The figure on the wharf merged into the blackness like a shadow, and though Calvert did not see or hear him leave the beach, he knew, after a few moments of concentrated staring, that the man was gone. Then, dimly aware of the opening chorus of the crickets and frogs, he sat back in his chair and thought it over.

Actually, on the face of things, there was nothing to think about. Certainly there was nothing remarkable about the picture of a native in a loin cloth standing on the oil wharf of a West African trading beach. But the picture, and particularly the physical perfection of the central figure in it, made Calvert of Allobar think luxuriously of Calvert of Indiana and New York as he might have been.

SECRETLY, he enjoyed these periodical excursions into his past. He liked to think, on these occasions, that destiny had been unkind to him, and it was surely comforting to feel that he would surely have been a man of consequence, if luck and the fickleness of several women had not started the wheel of fortune spinning in the wrong direction.

Not that Calvert blamed the women, severally or individually. But if he had not been fool enough to continue to believe in them, in spite of his experience with each of them—and here Calvert stared vacantly into space and presently began to review his life all over again.

Usually he had to cover the ground several times before he succeeded in reaching Allobar in proper chronological order, and this time was no exception. He refused to look at the menu the Accra cook presented for his approval; refused his solitary white assistant's shop and warehouse keys which he was supposed to lock in the safe at the end of each day; refused even the customary cocktail and the dinner that followed it, until he had brought his life down to date.

This done, he paused. His face, for a few seconds, expressed a period. Then slowly and cautiously he looked about him, afraid that other eyes might see and appreciate just how far Calvert of Allobar had fallen.

His degeneracy, as has been suggested, had reached the bath-towel stage. That is to say, having in the first place become too lazy to dress for dinner every night, he had descended from dirty shirts and oil-smeared drill trousers, to pajamas and Hausa-made sandals, and was now clothed only in a sleeveless singlet and a bath towel.

The towel was wrapped about him, waist high, and hung below his knees just like the print or madras overcloth of any native. So that the next and final step down was the easiest. All he had to do now was to substitute a piece of madras for the bath towel, turn his feet in the direction of any native village that appealed to him, and become too lazy to walk back. After that——

The gray-brown stubble on his chin, his tousled shock of tawny hair, his finger nails bitten down to the quick, his bleared and

drink-sodden eyes, and the shaky, undecided movements of his hands—all this, sprawled in a broken-down Madeira chair, on the veranda of the smallest and most insignificant trading factory on Allobar Creek, convinced Calvert that he was, without a doubt, utterly beyond the pale and therefore in possesssion of every reason necessary to feel heartily sorry for himself.

Even the scattered lights down the river, marking the habitations of several perfectly respectable men and two proportionately more respectable women of his own color, stared back at him stonily, without the hint of an invitation or even a hand shake in their makeup. Nobody cared anything about Calvert. He was headed straight down to hell and not a soul on Allobar Creek was making, or ever had made, the slightest movement or gesture to stop him. And Calvert had no desire to stop on his own account.

Why should he want to stop? Nobody would thank him for it.

This conclusion always settled things definitely and for all time. Sometimes it made him do the normal thing and order another drink. Sometimes, with a punctilious regard for the proprieties, he would put on a pair of trousers and write a letter to one of the ladies who, according to his verdict of the moment, was most responsible for his downfall.

There was never anything of reproach in these letters. They were always filled with a dignified regret that he, Calvert, had been such a pitiful disappointment to the lady and to himself. But there was, unfortunately, nothing that could be done about it. The die was cast.

As a general thing none of these letters was ever completed. Calvert usually went to sleep in the middle of a carefully rounded, grandiose phrase that made him think too much, and, waking up in trousers, stayed in them for a while.

This time, however, he did not order another drink. Neither did he write any letters. He bellowed for a house boy and ordered out the gig-boat.

His intentions, at first, were not at all clear. But when, without changing his attire in the least, he gravely took his place at the tiller of the gig and ordered the gig-boys, who were using paddles instead of oars, to head for the "gov'ment beach," the boys lifted their paddles in habitual obedience, glanced furtively at Calvert's bath-toweled state, then paused. One of them laughed; another tittered; but the second headman, who was acting as bosun, rebuked them gruffly in Kroo and finally asked Calvert respectfully—

"You want go gov'ment beach, sah?"

"Be so I talk. Be so I do. Gov'ment beach one time. *Animo!*"

The final word was Kroo for hurry up, but still the paddles trailed and the second headman suggested tactfully—

"Missy Kenley live dere, sah."

Calvert knew this. He was going to the government beach precisely for that reason. Somewhere in the back of his mind was a thought that if Miss Kenley saw him at his very lowest ebb, there was a chance, since she had not been in Allobar very long, she might consider it her duty to give him a helping hand.

As far back as Calvert could remember, it had always been the duty of young and beautiful ladies to rescue derelicts from damnation; and if he, Calvert, could succeed in making the proper impression——

"Gov'ment beach," he grunted impatiently. "Gov'ment beach, one time. *Animo!*"

AFTER that there was nothing for the second headman to do but to obey orders. The paddles lifted and fell, the nose of the gig swung down river, and Calvert, fumbling with the tiller ropes, looked himself over and decided that, as a subject for sympathetic regeneration, his equal was not to be found from Conakry to Calabar.

Presently he began to feel rather proud of this, and he was sure Miss Kenley, who was the district commissioner's sister, would agree with him. Her brother, of course, would not.

Walter Kenley, according to Calvert's present soggy estimate of him, was the kind of man who would make the third drink a capital offense. But some day, when Calvert of Allobar was a man again he would walk into Kenley's office with, Ruth Kenley's small hand resting proudly on his arm, and he would snap his fingers under the D. C.'s nose and say:

"—— you, Kenley! —— you! Look at me now!"

This satisfied him for a moment or two; then he realized it would not be quite proper to swear in the presence of a lady, so he

took some pains to revise the scene to suit everybody.

He had just succeeded in doing this when, straight ahead in midstream, in the very heart of the blackest kind of African darkness, and suspended in midair, having no apparent connection with sky or water, or anything else for that matter, he saw a thin blue light.

Calvert's jaw sagged, and simultaneously the Kroo-boys, rhythmic paddle stroke broke raggedly, the paddles drooping toward the water with a suddenly lifeless interest in the business of propulsion. There was the sound of a sharply drawn breath, an involuntary exclamation in Kroo, a whispering, chattering word or two, then a wide-eyed, gaping pause.

For a space, not more than a few seconds, the gig-boat rocked in midstream, and Calvert, his head a little on one side, stared stupidly with the rest at the phenomenon of the thin blue light. He had a foggy notion of a light shining through a slit in a solid board wall, but there was an indeterminate quality about the thing that baffled any conjecture.

The light appeared to be no broader than the width of a man's thumb, anywhere from ten to twenty feet long, and toward the lower end it curved back just a little as if it might possibly be attached to something that floated down stream. Then, all at once it began to broaden, and as it did so, some one—Calvert thought it was one of the Kroo-boys—gave vent to a piercing scream of fear or agony or both, and out of that scream, as it were, there came the low rumble of drums.

This was too much for the Kroo-boys and for a minute or so the gig rocked crazily.

"Sit down! Come back here! Bushmen! —— fools! No get sense foh you heads. Come back!"

But only the second headman remained, and if the light did not stop growing broader and broader ——

Calvert heard the second headman's teeth chatter, heard an animal-like whine, followed almost immediately by a splash. A drop of water stung Calvert's cheek, making him jerk his head back, and then he knew he was altogether alone, drifting slowly toward the light.

"—— fools!" he grumbled thickly. "The croes'll bite their legs off and then they'll come limping to me to be patched up."

The light was thinning down again and was paling off to a sky-blue that looked as if it would presently become white, but the drums were beating a little louder.

"*Hunh.* What kind of *ju-ju* trick is this any how?"

Then he was suddenly jolted forward in his seat.

"Here! Wait a minute. What the——"

The gig had stopped its aimless drifting, and was moving steadily down stream, just as if some one had taken hold of it and was

guiding it deliberately in a given direction. Calvert did not like this. So long as the light and the drums and so forth were impersonal, he might possibly be justifiably curious to know what it was all about, but he had no animus in the matter.

After all, these things were the native's own business. Witch-doctors, who had to make a living just like other less gifted people, had every right to fiddle around with whatever religious flummery they had in stock and wanted to use. But when they presumed to include him, Calvert, in the exercises, he felt that objection was in order.

He was becoming more and more sober with every amaze-filled second in any case, and, peering toward the bow of the boat, his eyes traveling the distance cautiously an inch at a time, he saw what looked like a hand gripping the gunwale; then another and another.

Quite naturally, Calvert paused, drew a long breath, and with somewhat ridiculous inconsistency under the circumstances, became aware of the fact that he was wearing a bath-towel.

This startled him more than it had any

reason to do since, of late, there was nothing unusual about it. But Calvert realized in a flash, that if it had come time for him to die—and the hands on the gunwale looked suspiciously like it—it would not make very polite reading if it were reported that he died minus his trousers.

So he came to his feet with a jerk, swayed uncertainly for a brief space, glanced with a shiver at the black and sluggish water, and saw the hands that crept along the gunwale creep along a little farther.

Suddenly the thin blue light flared white. The drums rolled out thunderously, and again there came that chilling scream of fear. Calvert dived.

FOR a little while there was a rushing of waters in his ears, a vague sound of thunder as he came sputtering upward, and a sensation of striking out for the bank—just a stroke or two—with "that —— light" flaring white and wide, blinding him so completely that he could not see.

All at once the light broke into sharp pointed fragments that scattered in a million directions, and one of the fragments struck Calvert somewhere about the head. Or he thought it did.

"I must be awful drunk," he murmured confidentially to some one who bobbed into being at his side.

Then with a smile that bore patiently the ravages of hard liquor, he turned over and went to sleep.

CHAPTER II

JOHN "JOCK" TODD

WHEN Calvert awoke, he was quite sober. Also, as was perfectly proper in a man who had just awakened from a bad dream, he was lying in his own bed with the mosquito curtains carefully tucked under the mattress. He was clothed in a suit of pajamas, and though his head buzzed a little, there was really nothing about his condition or surroundings to suggest that this morning was different from any other.

For several minutes he lay staring questioningly about him. He remembered distinctly a thin blue light, screams and the beating of drums, and Kroo-boys diving from the gig into the river. Then he had followed them and some one had hit him.

Calvert felt the back of his head, discovered a tender, egg-like lump and grinned. The evidence, he thought, was big and concrete enough, even if it did not explain very much. And when he had reviewed his situation from every possible angle, and from several that were not at all possible and therefore more in keeping with the affair, he called for his house boy.

His house boy was of Kroo persuasion and his name was Dit. He was a good house boy—rather better, in fact, than Calvert deserved, a faithful and sturdy henchman who, Calvert suspected, was somewhat ashamed, in a patient, long-suffering kind of way, of his master.

When he came and stood outside the mosquito curtain, he said, "Yessah," mildly and respectfully, then added, as if he thought it was expected of him—

"You bettah, sah?"

"How I catch this place?" Calvert asked abruptly.

"Ibo man bring you, sah."

"Ibo man? Which Ibo man?"

"I no *savee*, sah. Palaver live for river, sah. Be *ju-ju* kill-palaver, and Ibo man bring you for wharfside and say you fall down for creek. Den he go 'way. Watch boy no look him face propah, sah."

Calvert assimilated this a bit at a time, then flung back the mosquito curtain to get a closer look at Dit.

"Which man tell you be *ju-ju* kill-palaver?" he demanded, anxious to be definite on this point because "*ju-ju* kill-palaver" meant human sacrifice, which did not seem logical in the middle of Allobar Creek, almost under the nose of the government.

"All man talk so, sah. Gov'ment man be plenty angry. Two so-so slave man done hab him head cut 'way, and all man say *Obu-madu* done come for dis place to catch plenty head."

Calvert sat up straight, or tried to, but the effort made him dizzy, so he laid his head gently back on the pillow again.

"Bring me a brandy. No, never mind."

He lay with his eyes closed till the throbbing in his head died down a bit, then tried to get the significance of *Obu-madu* more clearly fixed in his mind.

The word was Ibo for "executioner" or "taker of heads," and apparently this personage, who was of the priestcraft, and

therefore, concomitantly, of the ancient, priestly family of N'ri, had arrived in Allobar Creek. And if Dit's version of the story were to be believed, he had officially announced his arrival by brazenly decapitating a slave or two. This, in such fashion as to indicate to the rank and file of Ibo-land that the powers of Walter Kenley, district commissioner, were not to be taken as seriously as the majority had probably imagined.

Even then Calvert, in spite of the manner in which he had been so carefully, and rather mysteriously, returned to his own wharf, knew the thing was serious. The district commissioner could not very well overlook the matter. If he did it would surely be repeated, and with a longer list of victims next time.

While, on the other hand, the inevitable investigation, which would be conducted with Kenley's customary rigor and zeal, would be likely to have something of the effect of a lighted match among a heap of shavings. Religion, of any sort, was a touchy thing to tamper with.

Calvert's opinion of Walter Kenley's gifts of discretion, was not complimentary. He did not dislike Kenley; simply considered him, in an official capacity, as a kind of governmental automaton that had no regard whatever for the human equation.

When circumstances turned the crank, Kenley began operating in a given direction until the job, whatever it was, was finished and the wheels of duty ceased to revolve. No blood, no nerves, no perspective. The things Kenley did had all been written down in a book beforehand, and every move he made spelled out the text letter by letter.

Of course, this was simply Calvert's point of view, which had once been of value, but was no longer considered to be reliable. And no one in Allobar would have agreed with him; not even John "Jock" Todd, who was the agent for the A. P. A—African Produce Association—and the only man of any consequence in the settlement upon whom Calvert could call with any surety of being invited to sit down and stay a while.

It was for this, and several other reasons, when he had assured himself that the remainder of Dit's information was based largely on the gossip of the beaches, that Calvert decided to pay John Todd a visit some time in the afternoon. Meantime he instructed his boy in the matter of applying hot cloths to the lump on the back of his head, and made inquiry regarding the fate of his Kroo-boy gig crew.

Apparently they had all, with practically no opposition to speak of, returned safely to the beach, and from the second headman downward, were more or less shiveringly awaiting Calvert's verdict on the subject of their wholesale desertion.

Calvert let them wait. He was in no hurry to pronounce judgment upon anything; not even upon himself. And as the hot cloths gradually reduced the lump to more modest dimensions and assuaged the throbbing in his head, he felt a growing need for being brought face to face with himself without prejudice of any kind.

Oddly enough, the phenomenon of the thin blue light was responsible for this. He was reasonably certain it was not much of a phenomenon, and that a sulphuric or phosphorescent ingredient would be the greater part of the explanation if any explaining were ever done.

But as far as he was concerned, he could hardly avoid the thought that there had been something of a rather grisly hand of destiny in the circumstance that the sacrificial proceedings had so fortuitously intervened between him and his intention to make an exhibition of himself before Ruth Kenley.

He was only too well aware of the fact that, had he been permitted to call upon the D. C.'s sister, as he had so solemnly intended, he would have been the laughing stock of the Nigerias for the remainder of his West African life.

And though the victims of *Obu-madu* would have been sacrificed even if he had not wanted to call upon Ruth Kenley in such fashion, he could not rid himself of the uncomfortable notion that their heads had been the price paid for saving him from the nethermost depths of ignominy.

Consequently Calvert went about the delicate necessity of shaving with an astonishingly steady hand, and made a careful selection, from his own shop stock, of a new pair of white flannel trousers.

This much, he felt, was due to the unknown martyrs in the cause of his salvation; and that his shirt was silk and spotless and his buckskin shoes as white as Dit could make them was further indication of his determination to invade the haunts

of respectability as presentably as the mere matter of clothes could make him.

AND when, in the late afternoon, he ordered out the gig, stipulating oars instead of the more slip-shod paddles of the night before, he was as little anxious to discuss the previous evening's performance with his gig crew as his gig crew was anxious to avoid discussing it with him.

The departure from the gig wharf was made amid a silence that grunted once merely to indicate Calvert's destination, and after that, though the oars perceptibly faltered when they neared the spot where the thin blue light had been, every man in the boat, including Calvert, kept his thoughts strictly to himself.

There was, of course, no sign of any kind left to mark the place of sacrifice. In fact, it was painfully obvious that the river was almost entirely swept clear of canoes; this at an hour in the afternoon when the bulk of trade at the several beaches was at an end, and the river usually was alive with native craft making their rolling or bobbing way homeward.

The government beach, which kept rather lonely vigil on the left bank of the creek, looked lonelier and more austerely governmental than ever just then. It lay farther down the river than any of the trading beaches, all of which were strung along the right bank.

Thus, its position separated it completely and comfortably from the contaminating touch of trade, since the trading element went there, as a rule, only to pay customs duties or to assist in the sometimes necessary business of completing an all-white cricket eleven, so that the Sierra Leonese government clerks might be beaten without any assistance from themselves.

Generally speaking, it was considered fortunate, on both sides of the river, that Allobar Creek was a trifle more than half a mile wide.

On the right bank of the river, cheek by jowl with the A. P. A. at the lower end, were Marsden & Co. and Perkins and Gray. Between these three trading factories, and Calvert's nearest neighbor, the somewhat lordly Oil Rivers Company, was a stretch of brush almost a mile in length; and the better part of another mile separated Paller & Co., which Calvert represented, from the Oil Rivers Company.

This, from a white standpoint, was Allobar. With a slight juggling of the arrangement of the various beaches, and in some cases, the addition of several more trading factories, it might just as readily have answered to the name of Warri or Segwanga or Opobo or Bakana or any other settlement in the Oil Rivers territory where the white man had decided to set down his Maderia chair and hang a punkah over it.

Allobar's individuality was not a white individuality. It was the individuality of Chief Otobo of the native town of Allobar, and of his son, Oku. In keeping with his name, which was Ibo for hippopotamus, Otobo should have been a fat and wallowing personage with many fat and wallowing wives. And the circumstances that he was not in the least like this, was the starting place of Allobar's somewhat notorious and exasperating personality, exasperating, that is, from a governmental standpoint.

That the name of Oku, his son, was the Ibo equivalent for fire, and that Oku lived up to the significance of his name upon every occasion—and often when there was no occasion at all—furnished something of a finishing touch to the government's point of view.

On the way down river Calvert—whose opinion, of course, no longer counted—had Otobo and his son distinctly in mind.

As nearly as he could judge, the exact location of the thin blue light had been opposite Anona Creek, which was an offshoot of the Allobar and joining the latter about midway between the Oil Rivers Company's beach and that of Perkins and Gray's.

On a dark night it was comparatively safe territory for simple murder, but even with Anona Creek and several other smaller waterways in the vicinity to provide a means of quick retreat, it had demanded courage and generalship of no mean order, coupled with the most reckless kind of fanaticism, to carry out such an ambitious program as the river had witnessed the previous evening.

With a glance that measured the now almost deserted distance from Anona Creek to the government beach, Calvert drew in his lips and narrowed his red-rimmed eyes and almost without any hesitation, relegated the fiery Oku to the rôle of a mere spectator.

Oku had acquired too much education to have had any great part in an affair of that sort. Undoubtedly, being Chief Otobo's eldest son, and therefore the chief priest of the family, he had occupied a reserved seat and had enjoyed the proceedings immensely. But Calvert was quite sure he had little or nothing to do with perfecting the arrangements.

Otobo, however, was another matter. He had had no education of the sort that is written in books. Therefore he was not nearly as insultingly pugnacious as his son. But he was infinitely more dangerous, if only because neither his tongue nor his hands had ever been heard or seen to lift against any man.

There were two other names that occurred to Calvert in connection with the affair, but he thought it would be interesting and advisable, before he came to any definite decisions or listened to any one else, to hear what John Todd had to say about it.

AT THAT moment, John Todd was not thinking about it at all. He was seated in the living room of the bungalow he had been at some pains to build for himself and his wife, and he was looking solemnly at his wife, who was not looking at him, and he was wondering, as is the habit of a man at times, if he had done right to marry a light-o'-mind lassie like Bella Imrie and, worse still, bring her out to a place like Allobar.

John was afraid he had not done right; else he would not have been giving the matter a thought. For, quite in keeping with his long, serious face, his large hands and most substantial feet, John did not really begin to think about a thing until he was just about ready to make up his mind on it.

The middle name, Jock, which he had earned from a compatriot of his in the first year of his acquaintance with the Coast, had been the result of a Homeric fight on Paller & Co.'s beach in Segwanga when John had been a junior assistant there.

On that occasion, under compulsion of course, he had fought and thrashed an agent named Brock, and had made such a complete job of it that Brock had to be sent home to get over it; and John had, of necessity, leaped into an agent's chair overnight.

Since then—or at least since he had married Bella Imrie—his hardest work had not been the making of an enviable record as a trader, but that of trying to convince the world which knew him best that he was not a fighting man.

He admitted that the name Jock, which was a fighting name, in contradistinction to the Biblical and more peaceful John, had been all right for his father, who had had few equals at putting the stane or tossing the caber. But it was not for him. If John had had any use for a middle name, and could have chosen one to please himself, the name he would have chosen and spelled out in full would have been Peace.

He was all for peace, at home or abroad. And he would have preferred a little more of it at home than he had been having lately. Not that Bella fought with him or answered him back or debated with him in any way the mastership of his own house. This, of course, was unthinkable, and Bella had been too well brought up even to dream of it. But there were other ways of which a man's wife could disturb his peace and make the blood of his wrath mount up into his head.

Of course, John did not blame Bella for being bonny. She could not very well be held accountable for the Lord's will. But he did think she might be a wee bit more circumspect about bringing the fact to the attention of his senior assistant and Dr. Allen and that man MacConnachie who had not long since comé down from Onitsha to take charge of the Allobar Public Works Department.

Perhaps John would not have minded his senior assistant, who was just a harum-scarum lad without a wish in the world to hurt anybody's feelings; or Dr. Allen, who was not long off the ships and had not yet become accustomed to having to get along without amusing himself with lady tourists to the Canary Islands. But that man MacConnachie ——

John was afraid there was no excuse for him. He was still more afraid that the time had come to say something to Bella about it. And this, even the mention of it, was a serious thing to a man like John Todd; much more serious, just then, than the *ju-ju* kill-palaver that had been so brazenly perpetrated on the river the night before.

He was glad Bella did not seem to be unduly anxious about that. But that she was the daughter of Andrew Imrie was

explanation enough for the absence of any sign of hysterics, or even of apprehension. Panic, as John had been well aware before he had married Bella, was as foreign to the Imries as flirtation was an abomination to him.

For a minute or so he allowed his glance to stray through the screened windows to where some Kroo-boys with machetes were clipping weeds from the white-guttered path that led from his front door to the shop and the white assistants' living quarters above it. John had lived there, too, before he had built the bungalow, and he still had his office at the agent's end of the house veranda.

But his mind was a long way from business, which had been funereally slack that day in any case, and presently his attention came back to his wife, who was immersed in a magazine that had a highly colored picture of a girl on the cover.

"Bella."

John coughed slightly before and after the name and Bella looked up instantly, her full red lips slightly apart, her big brown eyes, which had created such havoc in Allobar, widely intent upon her husband's solemn countenance.

"Aye, John," dutifully, and allowing the magazine to sink without any visible hesitation into her lap. "What is it?"

John paused. It would not do to be too hasty, and if it were not for that man MacConnachie——

A house boy hummed rather raggedly to himself somewhere in the vicinity of the rear veranda, and the sudden putter of a gasoline engine on the ominously silent river, made John turn his head to give an unhurried glance at a government launch that was starting up river in the direction of Onitsha.

At the same time he caught the glint of oars in the late afternoon sunshine, but he paid no heed to that; just stared for a few seconds at the white gash in the green face of the bush on the opposite bank of the river, and then permitted his attention to come slowly back to Bella again. His elbows, which rested idly on the arms of the Madeira chair in which he sat, had not stirred the fraction of an inch.

"That man MacConnachie," he began laboriously, and quite as if he were speaking of a puncheon of palm oil, "is not a good man."

"No?"

Bella's surprize was a pretty thing. MacConnachie would have enjoyed being maligned if only to see the effect it had.

"He's aye been terrible nice and kind to me."

John did not doubt this. And he had no comment to make on it. So Bella added, just in case John might not be aware of it—

"He was sayin' this mornin' he was one o' the Strath Kinnel MacConnachies."

John nodded. He did not question the MacConnachie man's lineage, but it did not alter his decision in the least.

"When he comes by the morn's mornin', ye'll have Zatza tell him ye're not at home."

Bella's wide eyes drooped just a little, and for hardly more than a second. Then they were looking straight at John again in perfect agreement.

"Just as ye like, John," she said simply. "I'll tell Zatza."

And John, who made no pretense of trying to understand womenfolk, did not suspect for a moment that his wife would rather have lost a hand than be compelled to give Zatza the Pure the privilege of ordering MacConnachie off the front veranda.

FOR a little while after that John sat staring at his feet. It had not been nearly as difficult as he had imagined it was going to be, and his sense of justice, which was almost as notorious as his middle name, Jock, compelled him to admit that Bella had been as reasonable as he could well expect.

But then, she was an Imrie—one of the Andrew Imries—and that, as John had felt compelled to assure himself rather frequently in the past month, was a circumstance a man could come pretty near to depending upon.

Suddenly Bella asked—

"Who's this comin' to see ye?"

John glanced down the lime-bordered path that led to the gig-wharf and saw a big man who looked something like Calvert, but who was too immaculately clean for that to be possible, come striding toward the bungalow, looking neither to right nor left. For something less than half a minute, John's gaze was concentrated on the visitor.

"Calvert," he announced to Bella laconically at last. "Paller & Co.'s agent. Ye

mind I came out for them the first time."

Bella remembered. Also she knew who Calvert was without being told. She had seen him one afternoon on Marsden's beach just at the moment when he was being bundled into a canoe by Marsden's agent, a thin, waspish man named Dilby, who had evidently had enough of Calvert's company for one afternoon at least.

But that Calvert had not looked in the least like this one. He had been dressed in a dirty, short-sleeved singlet and a pair of disreputable drill trousers that had been tucked slovenly into a pair of the sloppiest looking mosquito boots Bella had ever seen.

And Zatza the Pure, who always accompanied Bella on her visits to other beaches, had told her that even the canoe boys laughed at Calvert and were not afraid.

Bella had not believed this, and judging by other things Zatza had said about him, it was plain that she did not like Calvert; which, of course, made Bella correspondingly anxious to meet him, because Bella had never been conscious of fearing or hating any one or anything until she had encountered Zatza the Pure.

John's brows contracted slightly, then slowly cleared as Calvert came up the short flight of steps to the veranda.

"Ye can wait and meet him, if ye like," he conceded when he was sure Calvert's step was quite steady. "He knows this river better than any man on it, and if he'd uses his head as muc has he does his thrahpple, he could be an A. P. A. or a Marsden man the morn."

The barely perceptible shadow—invisible to John—that had been in Bella's eyes, drifted instantly. For when John complimented a man as extravagantly as that, that man was surely worth meeting.

Particularly if Zatza hated him.

CHAPTER III

ZATZA THE PURE

JOHN led the way out to the veranda, and Bella, putting the magazine aside, rose and followed. Merely as a concession to Bella's comfort—and something he would never have thought of for himself—John had had the veranda screened in, and Calvert was standing on the top step, outside the screen door, when they went out to meet him.

"Come in," John invited simply, and reached out a hand to pull the screen door open. "It's kind o' hot out there in the sun. How are ye?"

John's slow smile of welcome was no different in Calvert's case from that which he would have accorded the governor of the colony if that dignitary had chosen to call; and he shook Calvert's hand with as much or as little ceremony.

The fact that Calvert's eyes were rimmed with red and that his face was puffed and blotched with liquor—signs which an overnight redemption could not efface—did not, to all appearances, affect John in the least. He saw that Calvert was shaved and clothed in the garments of a gentleman, and this, under the circumstances as John knew them, was a lot to be going on with.

Calvert mumbled his thanks to John for opening the door, said he was in fine shape, then glanced quickly past John's shoulder at Bella.

He had known, of course, that John had brought a wife out with him, and once or twice, from the river, he had seen her pottering about among the flower beds in front of the bungalow, or caught the flutter of her white skirt as she crossed the beach on the way to the shop or to John's office. But he had never seen her at close quarters before; and now he knew, with the discriminating eye of an artist and a connoisseur, that her reputation for prettiness had not been exaggerated.

A shade under middle height, with a figure that was slim yet plump where gentle curves were necessary in the interests of symmetry, Bella Todd was in undisputed possession of the kind of prettiness that gave little quarter to any man. Whether she was as acutely conscious of it as she might have been was debatable; but Calvert, who immediately compared her with Ruth Kenley, hesitated not at all in deciding that she would cause a great deal more trouble.

John saw whither Calvert's glance had drifted, but he had become so accustomed to being ignored under these circumstances, that he had come to expect it. So he just said quietly—

"Ye never met my wife, did ye?"

Then, to Bella:

"This is Mr. Calvert, the agent for Paller & Co. at the top o' the river. If ye'll shake hands wi' him and ask him to have

a chair, maybe he'll tell ye something about paintin' pictures. The picture hangin' over my desk in the office in one o' his."

So Bella shook hands with Mr. Calvert as prettily as was her habit and invited him to sit down, wondering at the same time if he had put on his nice clean clothes just because he had expected to meet her.

Of course, even if she had not seen him being bustled off Marsden's beach, she would have known at once that he was a drinking man. His face told that story only too plainly. But Bella knew it was a good face, for all that. There was no harm in it to anybody but the man himself; and this, as she decided with an incisiveness that would have amazed the man she had married, was more than could be said for MacConnachie.

But she would never have suspected that Calvert was an artist, and for a minute or two this side of him, because it was more or less mysterious, held her at a disadvantage. She did not know anything about painting pictures, or how to speak to a man who did. So she was glad Calvert chose to brush the subject aside for the time being, and to be sure there would be no immediate possibility of coming back to it, she said, since the hour was about midway between tea time and dinner—

"I suppose you've had your tea, but maybe ye could drink another cup?"

"No, thanks," pleasantly.

"A cocktail, then," John suggested, because he felt it was the polite thing to do. "Or something longer?"

But Calvert shook his head, quite as if he were accustomed to refusing good liquor.

"Not a thing, John. I just came down to hear the latest from the front. News, by the time it reaches me, is apt to become sour."

Bella laughed at this, and Calvert was not slow to observe that there was no fear in the sound of her laughter; which led to the conclusion that she was either an unusually level-headed girl, or had an abundant faith in John Todd's ability to protect her under any circumstances.

John nodded.

"What have ye been hearin'?" he asked.

And Calvert told him, without, however, saying anything about his intended visit to Ruth Kenley, or of the proceedings incident upon it. John punctuated Calvert's abbreviated story with nods that became shorter and shorter, until they stopped altogether. But his long face became longer, the corners of his mouth drew downward, and his glance shifted rather absently toward the river before Calvert had done.

"That's about the truth o' it," he admitted, still watching the river which, just then, reminded him of an empty kirk. "And if this day's any kind o' an inklin' o' what's goin' to happen to trade, we might as well put up the shutters. Kenley's not been up your way, has he?"

"No. Why?"

"Oh, I was just wonderin'. He's been doin' a lot o' runnin' up and down river in that bit launch o' his, and I thought maybe he's been up to see ye."

Calvert shook his head, then asked in a matter-of-fact tone—

"Did he have anything to say to Zatza?"

Bella sat up with a little jerk, but John did not seem to be in the least surprized.

"What makes ye ask that?"

"Because I should say she was one of the three people in Allobar who could give him the information he is looking for. But probably wouldn't."

Still John manifested no astonishment, and paid no attention to Bella's rather poorly concealed excitement. He glanced through one of the living room windows behind him as the rustle of an overcloth struck softly upon his ear. When he saw that the owner of it was his own Kroo house boy, he said almost indifferently as his attention came slowly back to Calvert:

"Chief Otobo's the second, and his son Oku might be the third. But I doubt it. What's your notion?"

"Lali," simply.

Thunderbolts are generally supposed to be noisy things, but this one was quiet, even softly euphonious.

"Eh? That—*that*—wumman!"

Evidently John had some considerable difficulty trying to find an appropriate designation for Lali, and the one he decided to choose did not, quite obviously, do his exact opinion of her justice.

Calvert laughed, but Bella's eyes were agape with sudden curiosity. She had never heard John speak or look like this about any woman.

"Who is Lali?" she asked, trying hard to be just quietly interested. "I don't think I ever heard o' her before."

THIS was not strictly true. As every one was bound to do, shortly after arriving in Allobar, Bella had heard of Lali, the daughter of Okpari. But she had never chanced to see her upon any of the other beaches, and Lali—as John could have explained, though he had no intention of doing so—never set her small naked foot on the A. P. A. beach. That there was a reason for this was plain enough by the expression on John's face. Rarely, as Bella was only too well aware, did he allow himself to become so thunderously perturbed as the mention of Lali's name had made him.

"We'll not speak o' her," he decided shortly.

Calvert drummed his knuckles on the arm of his chair and gave the proceeding all of his attention, while he tried to smother a grin that threatened to spread from ear to ear. John's antipathy toward Lali was no secret to him, and the origin of it had been made as plain to him as Lali herself could make it, months before there had been any thought of *Obu-madu* in the mind of any man.

Not that Calvert believed everything Lali had told him, or had judged John according to her standards, which were always crude and often very vile. But he had known from the first that a canny man like John Todd had not chosen Zatza the Pure as a kind of companion and bodyguard for his wife, for nothing.

Presently, ignoring Bella's efforts to contain her curiosity within bounds, Calvert asked mildly—

"Have you said anything to Zatza about it?"

"No' a word," John declared calmly enough, though his tone was still gruff and dour. "Time enough for that when Kenley comes for her. I'll warrant she had no part in it, but, as ye say, she doubtless could tell a story if she had a mind to."

"Kenley's probably waiting till after dark."

"A lot o' good that'll do him. Otobo and his kind see better at nicht than in the day time."

In the pause that followed, Bella's lips parted several times as if to speak, but she decided it would probably be more discreet to allow the disturbing name of Lali to be left out of the conversation until such time as John was not within hearing distance.

"I think I'd like to talk to Zatza before Kenley does," Calvert said at last; and assumed an attitude of idle composure by clasping his hands about one knee. "She doesn't like me, and, of course, won't tell me anything that matters. But when she finds me seated comfortably on your front veranda, the sight may encourage her to become angry enough to talk just a little too much. I think it's worth trying."

Bella laughed, but sat a little deeper in her chair and began fumbling with a bit of wicker that had strayed loose from its moorings. Evidently she did not welcome Calvert's suggestion. And when John, whose brows had lowered thoughtfully, finally decided the matter by suddenly calling for a boy, Bella's lips drew together in a colorless line.

Then, with an effort that was as painful as it was desperate, she lifted her chin sharply and smiled at Calvert when there was no need for her to do anything of the sort. Calvert smiled, too: but he might have saved himself the trouble, for Bella's glance had shifted to the river, and she held it there, although there was nothing in particular to attract her attention except the drab green face of the bush on the opposite side of the creek.

Presently she heard John say to the houseboy who answered his summons—

"Bring Zatza."

"Yessah."

And when the boy had gone, John said to Calvert:

"Ye're not to make her too angry, or too feared. Kenley wouldn't like it, and the man has a right to be helped, not hindered, even if he is a stiff-necked chiel wi' a poker up his back. What are ye goin' to say to the wumman?"

"I don't know yet. That'll have to depend on what she has to say to me. And you can make up your mind in advance it isn't going to be anything complimentary."

Calvert grinned and included Bella within its radius, but she continued to stare at the bush on the opposite side of the creek; and, if anything, stared a little harder when the slow scuff of Zatza's feet sounded in the living room behind them.

And then, several age-long seconds later, Zatza the Pure stood in the living room doorway.

THE best description of her was Calvert's own. She always reminded him of a carelessly wrapped bundle, done up in faded blue print cloth. It was not much of a bundle in size, but what there was of it was replete with bumpy points that stuck out here and there without any discrimination. And out of the head end of the bundle there poked a face upon which the years had done their utmost and could do no more.

There was no saying how old Zatza was. Her great, great grandchildren did not toddle about her knees and establish the number of her years by the evidence of their own. Zatza—which is purity—had come out of the past, leaving no trace. She had had no children; and in Allobar it seemed as if her little face, sticking out of the wrapping of faded blue print cloth, had always stuck out just as it was doing now, the small black eyes alive with a shrewd kind of impudence, the rest of the face criss-crossed by the knife of Time into an inextricable tangle of wrinkles that served only to heighten the uncanny brightness of the eyes.

She reminded John Todd somewhat of a certain Ortali the Mummy who had been a most honored member of the Segwanga constabulary when John had been an assistant there. Perhaps this was why he put so much faith in her. In any event, he could not have chosen a safer handmaiden for his wife. For there was no one in Allobar, not even among the sons of N'Ri, who was regarded as a greater diviner of truth than she.

Several times she had been on the verge of death, because she had been accused of working evil upon her fellows by magic. But always, when the drinking test came, it had been her accusers who frothed at the mouth and died in writhing agony at her feet, while she stood quietly by, staring stedfastly into the empty cup in her right hand.

So that, in Allobar at least, Zatza had been allowed to go her own way unmolested for many years; and under the kernel store awnings of the several beaches on the river it was whispered among the women who squatted there, that it was because she had put a curse upon Calvert of Paller & Co. that he was not like other white men.

Calvert had heard this whisper, and he had had no difficulty in hearing the curse, since it had been flung at his head in his own office, some of it in Ibo and some in pidgin-English. This had been nearly ten years before.

And as Zatza stood in the Todds' living-room doorway, Calvert's first thought was that she had not changed in the slightest. His second thought, when her sharp little eyes lighted upon him and observed in a twinkling how clean and altogether comfortable he looked, was that she was going to damn him all over again without even asking John Todd's permission.

The withered little head came out of the wrapping of blue print cloth fully an inch more than usual, and her beady eyes spat venom with such whole-souled intensity that they almost crackled. The sunken, nearly invisible line of her mouth suddenly took shape in preparation for speech, only to snap just as suddenly out of sight again when John's quiet, broad voice decided to intervene.

"Sit down, Zatza," he invited simply.

For a second, perhaps, the woman's eyes shifted from Calvert to John, then gave their whole attention to the floor. There was a mild commotion within the faded blue bundle, then the small shrunken head sank straight down as the bundle doubled itself up and came to rest in a hunched-up ball just a foot or two from John's chair.

This movement completed, she did not lift her eyes in John's direction, but kept them steadily fixed upon the floor. So that, from Calvert's point of view particularly, it was as if all evidence of life in the bundle had entirely gone out of it, and there was nothing left to talk to but the blue print cloth wrapping.

"When Zatza the Pure is without eyes," Calvert said suggestively in Ibo, the sound of which strange tongue from out of the mouth of a white man made Bella glance sharply in his direction, "there is no more life in her than in the dried bark of the mango tree."

"Oh, what did ye say?" Bella asked at once, and seemed to forget all about her antipathy to Zatza for the moment. "It sounded just like the awfu' gibberish they're aye chatterin' among themselves. John says he knows what they mean, though he's no' able to string it together the way they do, but——"

"Wheesht, Bella," John broke in quietly. "Ye're not to interrupt Mr. Calvert."

"Oh, I'm sorry," softly, and with a penitent look toward Calvert that made him feel that the blame was entirely his. "Ye see, I've never heard a white man jabber to them like that afore, and ye did it so sudden-like, it fair took my breath away. It must be kind o' queer to know what they are bletherin' about a' the time. I've often wondered, when John's had to scold them, what it was they were mutterin' ahint his back. But it must take years and years——"

"Bella."

The soft voice stopped its gentle, accentuated flow of words just as if John had shut off the tap. And the momentary pause that followed was not at all pleasant for Calvert. John apparently took it for granted and paid no attention to it; and as Bella murmured another and softer "I'm sorry," and at once gave her attention to the bush again, John nodded toward Calvert in a heavily patient kind of way, thus assuring him of permission to proceed without fear of further interruption.

Calvert, with a quick glance at Bella, was not at all sure that he liked this kind of family discipline. But he had to confess that it revealed John Todd in a new and interesting light. Of course, like all well established methods of procedure in anything, it was all right—when it worked. And Calvert was quite sure it would not work if he were in John's shoes.

Consequently his respect for the long-faced, big-handed Scotch trader became an almost awesome thing that, the next time he, Calvert, got drunk, would make the past seem sadder than ever. Meantime, he took John's hint and fastened his red-rimmed eyes upon Zatza.

She was swaying slightly, back and forth, and paying no heed to any one. If she had understood any part of the little interlude, she had not betrayed the slightest sign of interest in it, any more than she had taken any notice of Calvert's insulting reference to a dried piece of mango bark. So Calvert, when he had thought a moment or two, tried again.

"Zatza's eyes are as two lights shining in the dark," he said persuasively. "The one is truth and the other is wisdom, and there is nothing in the hearts of men that does not become naked when Zatza looks in."

Evidently this was not flattering enough, because, though there was a slight stirring within the bundle, Zatza's head did not lift.

"Even the sharp-edged blade of *Obumadu*, the taker of heads, is less feared than the eyes of Zatza the Pure, when she has looked straight at the forehead or the throat or into the bowels of a man, three times."

The bundle shrugged its shoulders, but Calvert went on impressively:

"Then surely will that man die. Where the eyes of Zatza have rested, there will he die: In his head, or in his throat or in his belly. This thing have Ibo men known and seen for many moons, and all men know that Zatza, whose wisdom is the wisdom of the tortoise, will live forever."

The faded blue print wrapping of the bundle was pulled in a little tighter, and presently a voice emanated from it, speaking straight at the floor; a voice that mumbled thinly but firmly in pidgin-English:

"Calvert be fool. He be fool all time. Plenty soon, all same he be fool, he go die. Palaver set."

Calvert laughed, but John frowned and Bella's eyes came round in angry amazement.

"Ye—ye auld witch! How dare ye speak to a frien' o' my husband's like that, and on our ain veranda!"

"Wheesht, Bella," John said pacifically, and his frown gave way to a slight smile that was directed at Calvert. "Most like, that's not the worst o' what she'll be sayin' to Mr. Calvert afore he's done wi' her."

"John's right," Calvert broke in assuringly. "That's the mildest prediction she has made for my benefit in years."

Then to Zatza quickly, and in her own tongue:

"The bellies of the wise are filled with the yams that fools have harvested. It is the hands of the fool that fill the calabash, and the feet of the fool that go and come from the well. Zatza is wise. She does not speak of the death of a fool until she has become afraid of his wisdom."

Zatza's head lifted now, just as Calvert thought it would, and her little shining black eyes were bright as rapier points. An Ibo expletive that was not at all pretty in meaning or in sound was hurled at Calvert with waspish sincerity, and it was followed immediately by others, until her stock, for the moment at least, gave out.

At which Calvert solemnly and sadly shook his head.

"That be so-so small-boy talk," he said in degrading pidgin. "Canoe-boy talk so, when him head no fit to think li'l bit. Which man go say Zatza be *Obu-madu's* right hand, when she talk fool mouf like dat?"

THERE was a subtle suggestion in this which plainly gave Zatza pause. It made her eyes pull back, even though her head did not move; and for a moment or two she just looked steadily at Calvert as if she were trying to decide how much of the suggestion that she was *Obu-madu's* right hand, was just plain bluff. And in those few moments one forgot his red rimmed eyes and his liquor-puffed face, and saw only the man who, in his understanding of native psychology, had no peer in Allobar, and few, if any, in the colony.

Bella's eyes shifted from Zatza's face to Calvert's and back again, and even she could see that Zatza hated this social outcast because she was afraid of him. She might wrap herself about with mystery and age enough to fool John and Kenley and the others when the occasion demanded it, and make the vast majority of her own people give her as wide a berth as possible.

But Calvert was another matter. Bella could almost see the old crone flinging every ounce of venom she had into the teeth of Calvert's smile in an effort to wipe it out. But it only broadened, bit by bit, until it had developed into the dimensions of a grin that presently became a low and insulting laugh.

Zatza's glance wavered and broke. She looked quickly up at John as if seeking his protection, then mumbled whiningly to the floor:

"Zatza tire too much. She be old, old woman. She no fit to talk palaver no more."

And she began to rock back and forth, making crooning little noises in her throat as if she intended to rock herself to sleep there and then.

"Ye're not tired a bit!" Bella exploded impulsively. "Ye're just an auld witch, so feared o' Mr. Calvert ye'll no' dare to look him in the face!"

"Bella," John commanded quietly. "This is not a thing for you to——"

"But I dinna like her, John!"

"That's no' the point."

"And I canna stand hearin' her sniffin' at my elbow everywhere I go! I wouldna have her on the beach two minutes if——"

"Bella."

"Well, John, I canna help——"

Bella had suddenly reached her feet without quite knowing how or why. But having achieved that much, words melted away, and she stood looking helplessly about her as if in search of some means of escape from the expression on John's face.

"All—all—right—John." And then a pause. "I—maybe I'd better be seein' about the sup—I—I mean the dinner."

Her lips had but little color in them, but she managed to smile toward Calvert, then turned and walked steadily to the living-room doorway. She seemed to be about to pass through it when she stopped rather abruptly and, facing Calvert again across the faded print cloth bundle that rocked, with crooning indifference, back and forth on the floor, Bella said simply—

"Maybe ye would like to stop and have a bite o' dinner wi' us?"

Calvert actually winced. He had not been invited to dinner in Allobar in rather more than five years, and he took the precaution to glance quickly at John before he made any effort even to refuse the invitation.

And John, of all things, was smiling an odd kind of prideful approval of his wife's brave show of hospitality.

"Do that," John said sonorously. "We'd like to have ye."

So Calvert stayed.

CHAPTER IV

"DEATH, PARDON AND HAVE MERCY."

"ZATZA tire?" Calvert asked when Bella had left the veranda.

I tire too much. I be old, old woman."

The thin voice whined its submission to the crushing burden of age, but Calvert, who knew that Zatza used the infirmities of her years merely as a cloak whenever it happened to suit her purpose, did not allow it to influence him except in the direction opposite to that which Zatza intended.

"Maybe so," he suggested simply and quietly, and as if his motives were altogether kindly, "you no fit to be *Obu-madu's*

right hand? Old woman no fit to work night time, and old, old woman all same you, want plenty sleep all time."

Zatza's head lifted just a little, then decided to drop again.

"I no *savez Obu-madu* palaver," she mumbled. "So-so old woman no get sense for dat."

"Suppose gov'ment come, what you go do?"

John Todd look as if he were about to protest, but a quick glance from Calvert silenced him; and in any case the hint did not disturb Zatza in the least. Evidently she expected the district commissioner to send for her or come and talk to her, sooner or later.

"Gov'ment palaver no be my palaver," she said indifferently.

"What's matter *Obu-madu* take slave man head for dis place? He think gov'ment man be fool?"

"Maybe so." Still the voice of Zatza the Pure muttered her responses to the floor. "I no *savez*. *Obu-madu* be man for N'ri, and N'ri man no be all same 'nother man. N'ri man *savez ju-ju* palaver too much. Suppose N'ri man make *ju-ju* for gov'ment beach—" Zatza shrugged her shoulders to indicate that such a consummation would not surprize her in the least, "N'ri man fit to make *ju-ju* for dis veranda and you *savez* which thing he do or how he go do um."

Calvert knew Zatza did not expect him to believe this, and he was quite sure she did not believe it herself. But, for all that, it was a true enough version of what the average Ibo probably did think after the reckless demonstration this particular son of N'ri, whoever he was, had given on Allobar Creek.

Obu-madu, as Calvert was aware, was not his name. It was simply the name of his office in the priesthood of N'ri, and his identity was likely to remain the most carefully guarded secret in all Ibo-land.

For his purposes of the moment, he might be masquerading as a canoe boy, a small oil trader, a trading beach shop boy, or even as a member of Allobar's blue-coated, bare-legged constabulary; in almost any guise most remote from his real character. And his secret was undoubtedly shared by something less than half a dozen people, of whom Zatza the Pure—and Calvert did not doubt this for a moment—was one.

"All right, Zatza," he said pleasantly enough after a short pause, and took the precaution to shake his head warningly in John Todd's direction. "All same you no get plenty sleep nighttime, you fit to go now."

The faded blue print cloth bundle mumbled something unintelligible in Ibo and came shuffling to its feet. Apparently Zatza had no wish to prolong the conversation, or to allow Calvert's repeated suggestion that she had been up too late the night before, to inveigle her into a discussion on the subject of what she did with her evenings, more specifically during those hours when respectable old ladies were supposed to be in bed.

She did not even pause to hear if Calvert had anything else to say, and without a glance in John's direction or the hint of a backward look in Calvert's, she passed noiselessly through the living room doorway, giving Calvert the decided impression that she was a long way from sleep.

"What good did that do?" John asked skeptically. "She knows ye suspect her now, and she'll be more than ready for Kenley when he comes for her."

"Hunh. She'd have been ready for him any way," Calvert growled, looking glumly out toward the river where a solitary eight-paddle canoe with a grass awning made leisurely headway against the stream. "And the only purpose that kind of chatter ever does serve is to start them wondering how much of your talk is just talk.

"She didn't like me speaking to her in her own lingo, even if it isn't the first time I've done it. It reminded her all over again that I could do it, and she won't waste any time reporting me as a dangerous character to this *Obu-madu* individual, or whoever is acting as his private secretary."

John did not smile.

"I was thinkin' that. But will it not be likely to put you in more danger than them. They know who *you* are, and Paller's beach is kind o' far away from help if ye chanced to be needin' any. Mind ye, I'm not tryin' to make this business out to be worse than it is. That's no' my way. But there's never any harm in a bit o' caution."

Calvert nodded, but his glance strayed to his feet, and for a minute or so he appeared to be giving John's advice solemn consideration. As a matter of fact he was trying to remember how long it was since

any one had bothered to give him advice upon anything; and also how long it was going to take John to repeat his invitation to have a drink. Calvert's throat was insistently reminding him that talking was dry work, and that he had still to take his first drink that day.

It was this thought that encouraged him to look at the sun, which as he discovered, was making ready to take its customary plunge behind the ever-circling green of the bush. And as his glance was on the point of coming hopefully back to John, it stopped short and concentrated upon the A.P.A oil wharf.

THERE was no tall, amber-filled glass at Calvert's elbow this time. He was as sober as the proverbial judge, and conscious of it every second. So that the somewhat distant, statuesque figure of a native in a loin cloth, standing on the outermost edge of the A.P.A. wharf, did not, even in the first second of startled recognition, assume any proportions other than its own.

"Well, I'll be ——! Isn't he—just a minute, John. I want to get a closer look at that chap."

And without any further apology, Calvert leaped for the screen door and bolted toward the oil wharf. John did not know who "that chap" was, but he noted the direction of Calvert's flight and followed at a pace more in keeping with his character and his dignity.

The distance from the bungalow to the oil wharf was a trifle under a hundred and fifty yards, and Calvert, though he did not exactly run, because this would have made him too conspicuous, reached the wharf before John Todd had arrived at the decorative clump of limes and cactus that acted as a kind of half-way mark.

And as Calvert approached nearer and nearer to his objective, he convinced himself at every step that he had made no mistake in his man.

The tall, magnificently proportioned bronze figure was undoubtedly that of the native he had seen standing on his own wharf the previous evening at the same hour. And the similarity of the circumstances surrounding the figure's appearance before him, set Calvert immediately to wondering if standing upon an oil wharf, facing the setting sun, was not something of a rite having a trading or religious significance, or both.

Normally—if he had not seen him before—Calvert would not have given the man a second thought. And as he stepped on to the wharf, taking note of the fact that his approach did not seem to disturb the native in the least, he wondered what he was going to do or say to him when he reached him.

So, taking thought in the few yards that were left to him, Calvert decided to say nothing until he had had a really good look at the man. And one of the first results of this really good look was further confirmation of the native's identity in the shape of the anklet he wore loosely around his right ankle.

It was made of some kind of fiber, but as fiber anklets of every description were common enough among the Ibo, Calvert did not give this one more than a passing glance; confessing that, as an effort at personal adornment, it was modest enough, detracting nothing from the utter simplicity of the loin cloth.

Calvert had strolled up the wharf until he stood on the outermost edge of it, just a few feet away from the bronze giant who had aroused his curiosity. But still the man did not turn his head or in any way take notice of Calvert's presence so near to him. He was evidently intent upon the dying of the sun to the exclusion of all else, and if the lift of his head meant anything, he was undoubtedly deriving some kind of spiritual ecstasy from the sight.

His skin was almost light bronze in color, splashed here and there with shading of a darker hue, and as a sculptor's model he would have been perfect just as he stood. The powerful muscles of shoulder, back and thigh lay quietly at repose under the moist and shining skin, upon which, from head to heel, there was no spot or blemish.

And though Calvert, in his years of wandering throughout the length and breadth of the Niger Delta swamps, had seen not a few blacks whose physical proportions had attracted his artistic eye, he was compelled to admit that this man had an air as well as an appearance of difference that was as decided as it was hard to define.

Perhaps it was the easy assurance of his posture that so plainly took no thought of what any one might think of him; or the fineness of his red-brown skin, or the

superiority that is always present in the virtue of stark simplicity. Whatever it was, a close-quarter inspection increased rather than diminished Calvert's interest, and when John Todd was about to step on to the wharf, Calvert edged a step nearer to the man and said indifferently—

"You wait foh canoe?"

If the native had become flustered at finding a white man suddenly so near to him, Calvert would have been disappointed. But there was no excitement, no quick turning of the head or any suggestion of the usual sidewise retreat that always cautiously preceded an intention to bolt. Only the head moved, and that just a little in Calvert's direction, and a voice that was quiet and sure said respectfully:

"Yessah. I wait li'l bit."

Calvert nodded, glanced briefly in John Todd's direction, then asked casually—

"You be Ibo man?"

"Yessah."

"Which place you come?"

"Nishi, sah."

At this point John strolled up to the wharf's edge, grunted an unintelligible greeting to Calvert and, making no effort to interfere, just stood idly by gazing indifferently out upon the river. John's grunting announcement of his arrival, however, had the effect of inducing the Ibo to turn his body a little farther around so that Calvert had a better view of his face.

And it was a good face, broad and strong, with a decided hint of leanness about the lips and nose that gave it that same touch of fineness that Calvert had found in the silky smoothness of his skin. Also, the eyes, which held a queer suggestion of sorrow, did not shrink in the slightest when compelled to accept the presence of two white captains of trade at his elbow.

"I *savez* Nishi," Calvert admitted; and then, as four bells sounded on the beach behind him, "What you name?"

"Biko, sah."

This also was simple and expressive enough. If Calvert guessed aright, it was short for Onwu-biko, which, since it meant "O Death, pardon and have mercy," generally indicated that its owner was the last and only surviving son of his parents.

"You trade li'l bit?"

"No, sah. I no catch money foh trade."

"What thing you do?"

"I work foh gov'ment beach, li'l bit. Foh barrack, sah. Cap'n Talbot say, maybe so, plenty soon, I go be him boy."

Calvert was instantly aware of a sinking feeling, and more acutely aware than ever of the necessity for a drink.

Although Captain Dick Talbot was the officer in command of the detachment of the W.A.F.F.—West African Frontier Force—stationed in Allobar, and the man who was more likely to marry Ruth Kenley than any one else Calvert could think of, even these altogether respectable attributes did not lessen Calvert's disappointment in the least.

That this magnificent specimen of manhood, this physical inspiration in bronze, who so impressively said his prayers, or something of the sort, to the dying sun; that he should so humbly aspire to the job of cleaning Talbot's boots, sewing buttons on his shirts, and performing the other half-hundred menial tasks that fell to the lot of a house-boy—this, to Calvert, was anti-climax in its worst form.

Talbot would probably clothe him in a second-hand uniform of some kind, and reduce him to the level of a shuffling-footed automaton who, like all the rest of the house-boy breed, would lie and steal and get periodically cuffed for forgetting to empty Talbot's wash basin.

HOWEVER, the sun was disappearing with its habitual tropical speed, and the man who had called himself Biko was standing at respectful attention as if he wanted to be quite sure that Calvert had asked all the questions he happened to want to ask. John Todd was staring stonily out upon the swiftly darkening river, patiently waiting to hear why his guest had deserted his veranda so suddenly. As far as John could see, Biko was just a well-built native in a loin cloth.

"You *savez* my name?" Calvert asked at last.

"Yessah. You be cap'n foh Paller beach, sah."

Calvert nodded.

"All same you come look me, some time, we go talk li'l bit. *Savez?*"

"Yessah. Maybe so, two, t'ree day pass, I come foh you beach."

Then, with a peering glance down river:

"I think so, canoe no come foh dis wharf. Maybe so he live foh Marsden beach. I go dere."

Calvert admitted this was possibly the case, and as Biko, without further ado, strode off with a kind of unassuming majesty into the gathering dusk, the artist-trader stood watching him until he had dimmed out of the picture and disappeared into the palm-shaded path that led to Marsden's beach.

"And they're going to make a house-boy of him."

"Who is?" John growled. "And what of it?"

Calvert looked at John more in sorrow than in anger.

"Didn't you see the way he lifted his feet? Just as if he had air cushions in the soles of them. That's a man, John, made from head to heel as the Lord intended us to be made. He should be a prince, another Hannibal, and they're going to make him empty dirty water out of wash basins! Damnable!"

John's smile was slow and patient as he turned and began to stroll back to the bungalow.

"Aye, it is that. But is that a' that's botherin' ye about the man? Why did ye run out so sudden-like to speak wi' him?"

Calvert had stepped off the wharf before he answered this question, which involved more of an answer than he cared to give.

"I saw him on my own wharf last night, standing just where he was standing on yours. And there was something about his attitude, the pose, I suppose it was, that made me want to get a closer look at him. So when I saw him posing tonight again—well, we'll see."

John did not say what he thought of this explanation, and they leisurely covered the remainder of the distance to the bungalow in silence, while the dark closed about them like a cloak that was furbished here and there with dully glittering buttons of light. Arrived within the screened protection of the bungalow veranda, Calvert resumed his seat, conscious of a throat that reminded him of a barrel of lime.

And John asked simply—

"Have ye stopped drinkin'?"

The suddenness of the question and John's blunt assumption of the right to ask it, startled Calvert. He looked quickly into the Scot's quiet, understanding eyes, then down at his hands, and finally out to where the swinging lantern of a watchboy attracted his wavering attention.

"Stopped?"

He said the word rather thickly, more to the light than to John, and then laughed as a man laughs when he knows that his appearance of respectability goes no deeper than a shave and a hair cut. And Calvert hadn't had the hair cut.

"I didn't know I'd even hesitated. Why?"

John did not commit himself; just turned his head in the general direction of the galley where his house boy's ear was supposed to listen perpetually for the sound of his master's voice.

"Boy!"

And Calvert grinned a sheepish grin and said hoarsely—

"Make mine brandy, John."

CHAPTER V

AKKA-CHUKU

DINNER at the Todd's was a simple affair; even to the grace which John habitually but reverently mumbled to assure his wife—who needed and asked for no such assurance—that the years he had spent among the heathen had not unfitted him for the probable duty of deaconship in the kirk at home when he finally brought his wandering to a halt and settled down.

Calvert, for his part, accepted the grace just as he accepted everything that was part and parcel of his host. If such were John's way, it was reasonably certain to be a fairly well-founded way, with generations of justification for its existence.

And Calvert had long since learned the folly of sneering at established practise; even the established practise of destroying twins at birth, as the Ibo and other more scantily clothed Nigerian peoples had always done, and doubtless would continue to do for several centuries to come.

This was reprehensible, of course. But, having lived many years of his life in numerous cities of stone and iron where the refining influences of civilization foregathered, Calvert was not unacquainted with the stupidity of a neighbor's utterly reprehensible point of view on almost everything from feather-beds to bloaters and a tax on bathtubs.

In fact, he was convinced it was the crass ignorance of one's contemporaries, on the simplest and most obvious things, that made life interesting and worth living. The game

would not be worth a candle if a man could not feel comfortably superior to some one in something.

Meantime, Calvert gave most of his attention to Bella, because she seemed to want him to and did not feel superior to any one in anything.

He was glad the girl showed not the slightest effects of having been disciplined "before folk." He liked to think—if only to preserve the exuberant sparkle in her eyes—that she did not take John any more seriously than was necessary. But he wondered a little uneasily at the definiteness with which the sparkle was so persistently directed at him.

Of course, it did not mean anything. It was just her way of making him feel altogether welcome at their dinner table. But he hoped, for the sake of his health and peace in the near future, that John would regard it exactly as he did.

Because Calvert knew, above all things else, that he was a fool where a woman was concerned; and Bella Todd was either naive to the point of unbelief or far too daringly clever and dangerous a woman to be around in a place like Allobar.

Quite naturally the conversation reverted to the startling affair of the previous evening. Every dinner table in Allobar was doing ample justice to the subject and, gaping at the audacity of the whole business, wondered what Walter Kenley, the district commissioner, would be likely to do about it.

It was just as Bella was rising from the table, and was assuring Calvert that both John and he would be more comfortable with their drinks and smokes on the veranda, that the sound of a step on the gravel path, leading up from the gig-wharf, warned them of the approach of a visitor.

And in another minute all three were standing under the light of the veranda stand-lamps, and John was sonorously inviting Walter Kenley to have a chair.

THE D. C. was alone. He was a tall, spare man, with a lean, serious face which the pallor of the tropics fitted perfectly. Heavy black eyebrows shaded his dark eyes like a kind of somber awning, and though his smile, when he greeted Bella, was kindly and gentle enough, the slight dilation of his lean nostrils betrayed to Calvert an impatience to get down to business with as little delay as possible. That he was clothed in unostentatious gray flannels and wore a pair of heavy-soled walking boots further indicated that he had stopped at the Todds merely in passing.

And, having declined a drink, accepted a cigaret and given Calvert's respectable appearance a glance of somewhat startled suspicion that needed no words at all, he queried tersely:—

"Zatza around?"

John said he thought she was, called a boy and told him to fetch the woman.

Bella, who had seated herself in a small rocker next to Calvert, caught the latter's eyes and smiled; a sidling kind of smile that, though neither Bella nor the rocker moved, placed her with discomforting definiteness under his protection. Why this was necessary, and why she should choose him as a protector, was not at all clear to Calvert, who stirred uneasily and tried to concentrate on Kenley's monosyllabic answers to John's blunt searching for the truth.

"Zatza'll not tell ye anything," John warned the D. C., as the scuffing of a heavy naked foot came through the living room. "And I'll warrant——"

The approaching Kroo house boy finished it for him.

"She no live, sah."

This meant that Zatza was nowhere to be found upon the premises.

"I thought so," John commented dryly, and did not trouble to ask the Kroo-boy if he were sure of it.

Neither did Kenley. He nodded a quiet acceptance of the house boy's information, paused for a moment or two, then rose.

"Send her over when she gets back, will you?"

"I will if you say so," John conceded willingly, and got to his feet to accompany Kenley to the gig-wharf, knowing it would be useless to try to encourage him to lengthen his visit. "But it's my opinion ye'd be better served if ye left her alone."

Kenley smiled vaguely as he edged toward the screen door.

"Not very talkative, is she?"

"She'll not tell ye a word."

Kenley nodded to indicate that John's view did not differ materially from his own. Then, as if he were thinking of something that excluded even the prettiness of Bella Todd, he begged to be excused for rushing off so hastily and muttered a perfunctory goodnight to Calvert.

Nevertheless, he made no objection to John's evident intention to go as far as the gig-wharf with him, even though John's pace, as was well known, was always an unhurried, methodical one. Also, Kenley passed out and down the gravel path, measuring his step to John's, as if time had suddenly become no object.

"He's an odd man, isn't he?" Bella commented, when she was sure the D.C. was out of hearing. "Do ye think he'll put Zatza in jail?"

Calvert laughed and evaded her eyes as a stray mongrel evades the dog catcher's net. "You don't like her, do you?" he asked, unnecessarily.

"I hate her, Mr. Calvert."

This was strictly confidential. The softly accentuated "Mr. Calvert" made it so. And it asked him not only to accept the confidence but also to talk it over with her in a comfortable, friendly way, just as if he had known her all her life. Evidently there were few, if any, preliminaries with Bella Todd.

"I hate her because I'm feared o' her," she continued whisperingly and with amazing honesty, while Calvert was making up his mind what to say. "And I wouldn't tell John that, because he'd say it was just nonsense, and that there was no such thing as a witch. But sometimes when I catch her lookin' at me out o' her wee bit shoe-button eyes, it just fair gars me—I mean, it makes me shivery and feared, as if something awfu' was going to happen!"

Calvert studied his white buckskin shoes minutely. He knew in his bones he was in for it, and that this little confidence of Bella's was only the beginning. His duty of the moment was to sympathize with her in opposition to John's attitude of mind on the subject of Zatza, and this kind of sympathy, no matter how justifiable, was always bad. Always. So he strove manfully with his impulses and with an ingrown weakness to be sympathetic with ladies who were charming to look upon, and said in a voice that rumbled almost gruffly:

"It's bad to let your imagination get the better of you like that. Zatza's harmless. Just an old woman. Don't think about her."

"But I can't help it, Mr. Calvert! I've tried and tried, but it's no' a bit o' use. And it's because I know she's feared for her life o' you, that I'm——"

Bella stopped there. Her eyes gave a sudden hesitant impression, just as if she had stepped back a pace or two, and her mouth became a tight, puckering line. The slight tilt of her chin made words almost unnecessary.

"But I'll not bother ye about it. John wouldn't like me to be speaking of it ahint—I mean, behind his back."

Calvert nodded because, for the moment, he did not know what else to do. He knew his expression was discouraging, and that Bella's sudden assumption of dignified reserve was the result of it. But for the life of him he could not change it. He felt it would be too much of a risk. Consequently the pause that followed was rather painful and, as far as Calvert was concerned, given over to watching a bobbing hurricane lantern in the hands of a watchboy down at the gig-wharf.

BELLA watched Calvert. She did not have to look toward the wharf to see if John was coming back. She could tell his step among a dozen a hundred yards away. Then she asked with disarming simplicity—

"Who is Lali?"

Calvert's head came round slowly.

"She's an Ibo woman, the daughter of Chief Okpari," he said and did not allow his tone to inform Bella that he knew perfectly well what she was after.

"And who is Chief Okpari? I don't think I ever met him."

"Possibly not. I don't think he's been in Allobar in at least a year. Lives in Okpari-town, up Nishi way."

Bella seemed satisfied with this, but asked after a second or two of hesitation—

"Lali doesn't live there, does she?"

"No."

"Is she married?"

"Not that I know of."

"Just a girl, maybe?"

"No. I'd say she was very much a woman."

"Then why didn't she marry? I thought chief's daughters always got married."

Calvert glanced toward the wharf again.

"Not always," he said, and hoped the cross-examination would stop there.

Bella waited a little while. Evidently the D. C. had had something to say to John that he had not wanted to say before her or Calvert, so she knew she did not have to be so hurried as to seem anxious. Then she smiled ever so slightly and murmured—

"John doesn't like Lali, does he?"

Calvert smiled, too.

"I'm afraid not."

"Why?"

"I think I'd rather let John answer that."

"Oh, then you know why he doesn't like her?"

Then Calvert realized he would have to be more careful. But he tried to make the best of it as quickly and convincingly as possible.

"No. Not exactly. But Lali is liked and disliked by a lot of people, and John just happens to be one of those who hasn't a very good opinion of her."

"I see," with an affirmative kind of skepticism that did not accept Calvert's version as final. "What makes ye think she knows about what happened last night? Is she a friend of Zatza's?"

"No," Calvert answered truthfully, and smiled. "If she were as dead as Zatza would wish, she would be very dead."

Bella did not laugh. Her brows came together thoughtfully and, for a minute perhaps, she had nothing to say. But Calvert could see that she was thinking more kindly of Lali simply because Zatza disliked her so much.

He realized, of course, that in a place like Allobar, with little or nothing to do, Bella had plenty of time to think, and undoubtedly the constant presence of Zatza would not tend to make her thoughts more cheerful, or to lessen the intensity of such superstitious fears as her Highland upbringing was likely to make her a prey to.

He did not approve of the wizened old Ibo woman as a companion for a girl like Bella in her little wanderings, but he admitted that, under the circumstances, John probably knew his own business best, and that nothing he, Calvert, could say or do would alter the dourly methodical Scot's course in the least.

Then Bella asked, as if she had been thinking the whole thing out—

"If Zatza's not a friend o' this Lali woman, and there's so few o' these black folk know about what happened last night, what makes ye think Zatza is one o' them and Lali another?"

"Oh, I'm just guessing," Calvert answered rather lamely, and realized that he had to think quickly to keep pace with Bella's shrewd and nimble methods of reasoning. "In affairs of that sort guessing is the best we can do. But I don't think, as far as we are concerned any way, it is really worth bothering about. It just comes as a shock to Kenley's pride, and of course, he's got to make some effort to find out about it"

There was a dull dissatisfaction in Bella's eyes when Calvert had labored to the end of this explanation. Obviously she had expected him to be much more informative and obliging, and instead he was as canny as any Scotch cobbler. Also, she knew perfectly well that he deliberately lied when he said the thing was not worth bothering about.

All day long and most of the previous night, Bella had sensed a grim kind of unrest and everywhere she looked she seemed to get an impression of terror that did not cry out.

There was nothing tangible about this; nothing in the blank, stoical faces of the natives on the beach that betrayed it. But if she had been asked to explain her impressions, she would have searched somewhat aimlessly for words, and then would have thought, first of all, of a place she used to pass on her way to school. She had completely forgotten about that place and the odors that emanated from it, and had scarcely given it a thought since she had ceased to pass it by. And now she was thinking more of the odors than of the place itself.

Officially it had been known as an abattoir. To Bella and her classmates it had been plainly and simply "the slaughter house"; a place of blood that smelled of blood. And, sitting on the veranda of her own bungalow, looking out into the firefly dotted blackness round about, the one word that fitted her impressions best was blood.

She would not have tried to explain it, nor could she have given any coherent reason why the old, nauseating slaughter house odor should have chosen to come back to her. But there was no doubt in her own mind about it. Also, it was not just chance; the mere return of a forgotten impression or sensation out of the subconscious. It was too real and too imminent for Bella to believe anything like that.

Calvert, waiting for her next question, did not suspect for a moment what was passing in her mind. And when she finally looked straight at him and smiled as if she were willing to make the best of a rather poor evening, he said apologetically—

"I'm sorry to have to be so indefinite, but——"

"Oh, that's no matter," Bella assured him philosophically. "But I will admit I'm just a wee bit disappointed in ye. For a man who can talk to these queer, half-mad folk in their own queerer gibberish, ye're awfu' short on first-hand information."

Then she laughed and went on, before Calvert could say anything in his own defense:

"But, as ye say, it's not worth the bother o' thinkin' about, and maybe Zatza, when I catch her lookin' at me the way she does, doesn't mean the half of it."

"No, of course not," Calvert rumbled, but did not feel at all comfortable when she smiled to assure him that she did not hold his ignorance or his caution against him. "She couldn't look any other way if she tried."

Bella seemed content to let the matter rest there, but in half a minute she had returned to the charge from a new angle.

"You're beach is no' very handy, is it?"

"You mean too far away?"

"Aye. Ye're kind o' off by yousel' up there. Even worse than the Oil Rivers Company."

Calvert admitted that his company's choice of a trading beach site had not been a sociable one.

"But Paller's beaches seldom are," he added. "I know of only one that mixes in with the crowd."

Bella nodded thoughtfully.

"And yours is no' a very big beach either?"

"The smallest in Allobar," Calvert confessed without injury to his pride, since he no longer had any qualms on the subject. "I've just one assistant—a Glasgow man, by the way, named Ferguson."

"Does he——"

Bella smothered that impulse just in time. She was going to ask, "Does he drink, too?" but realized that this would not be very polite. So she changed it haltingly to—

"Does he never come down river?"

"Oh, now and then. He's a quiet chap. Hasn't much to say or any inclination to go out of his way to say it."

"Then he'll not be much company for ye?"

Clavert grinned. He knew what his assistant thought of him, even though Ferguson had never so far forgotten himself to put it into words.

"Oh, we get along well enough. Most men are best left to themselves out here."

"Why's that?"

"Less friction. We're not all of us John Todds. Most of us have nerves and impulses and rotten tempers, and if there happens to be any one around to fight with, we fight. If there isn't we just kick a house boy or two downstairs, and nobody's hurt."

"No," Bella agreed sagely, and there was an odd faraway look in her eyes, as if she were thinking of something foreign to the subject, "it's no easy to hurt a house boy."

Then she was silent for a little while, and Calvert took the opportunity to glance toward the gig-wharf again, where the hurricane lantern in the hand of a watchboy, still marked the presence of John Todd in prolonged and evidently earnest conversation with the D.C.

"That man Kenley's havin' a lot to say for a man in a hurry," Bella commented dryly. "And John, most like, will not breathe a word of it when he comes back."

She laughed softly.

"A woman wi' any kind of a bump o' curiosity, has an awful time of it out here. Everybody's whisperin' into every ear but hers!"

This was meant to be good-natured and Calvert grinned as he was expected to do. But he read a distinct note of genuine disgust and dissatisfaction into the complaint; a dissatisfaction which Bella would suffer not one moment longer than was necessary. She would get all the information she wanted somewhere; and if Calvert were not mistaken, the time would be sooner rather than later. Then he heard her say suddenly—

"Here's John, now."

CALVERT saw the hurricane lantern coming up the path with two shadowy figures behind it. The *phut-phut* of a launch's engine faded out up river, carrying Kenley with it, and presently Calvert heard John order the watchboy—

"Tell Mr. Gibbs come for my house, one time."

The watch boy and his lantern bobbed across the lawn in the direction of the assistant's living quarters, where he would be most likely to find Gibbs, the senior

assistant, and John came up to the screen door of the bungalow alone.

Calvert got a glimpse of his face before he pushed the door open, but it was Bella who reached her feet first and she who asked, just as if she were inquiring what John would like for his dinner—

"What's wrong, John?"

John pushed the door open and came in. Then he closed it securely and methodically behind him, so that not even the smallest of mosquitoes could disturb his wife's comfort. His long, somber face was longer than Calvert had ever seen it, and he looked at Bella as if he owed her an apology it would be hopeless to make.

Then he said:

"Kenley says he'd like ye to go over to his bungalow to keep his sister company for a wee while. He's like to be away for two or three days and—och, she's a nice lassie, Bella. Ye'll not mind it a bit."

Calvert had a suspicion that this was a very mild way of putting what was actually on John's mind; but Bella, who had known John was going to tell the greater part of a lie before he opened his mouth, did not seem to doubt the mildness of his explanation in the least.

"I'll not be much company for a lady like Miss Kenley," she suggested with equal mildness. "But if ye'd like me to go—When is Miss Kenley expectin' me?"

"I—well, ye see, Bella, Kenley's goin' up river the night, and he said if ye didn't mind—if ye'd be so good—aye, that was the way he put it—if ye'd be so good as to go over the nicht."

"Now?"

"Aye. That'll be best. Calvert'll take ye over in his gig. I've two or three bits o' matters to see about, and then I'll come over for a wee while just to be sure you're comfortable."

Then suddenly and rather bruskly to Calvert—

"You'll see to it?"

"Surely," Calvert returned in a voice that did not in the least betray a full and complete realization of the honor John was conferring upon him, particularly under the circumstances.

"That'll do fine," John said. "And as I think Miss Kenley's expectin' ye any minute, ye'd better be makin' a start."

Calvert nodded, and Bella, who had become just a little pale and anxious in the past few seconds, saw Calvert's shoulders lift a little. Then with a purposely exaggerated flourish, he was bowing to her as she had read about cavalier-like men doing in books.

"At your service, madam."

Bella laughed, and though the pitch of it was just a trifle high, the sparkle leaped into her eyes again, and with a murmured word to John, she literally danced off in pursuit of clothes that, though hurriedly chosen, would not ill compare with Ruth Kenley's.

And in the short and significant pause that followed her exit, Calvert looked straight at John, and John stroked his long chin and nodded slowly and definitely.

"The transport department'll pick up Ferguson and the rest of the Kroo-boys ye've got up there," he said and obviously hoped Calvert would accept this as explanation enough. "Just a precaution, of course, because they're so far out o' the way."

Calvert's shoulders lifted a little higher, and with a sharpness that was rather startling.

"When?"

"Some time the night."

"Who the —— asked them to pick up Ferguson, or any one else on my beach?"

"Wheesht, man, wheesht! This is no' a time to be arguin' wi' the government. If I'm willin' to let them give me a hand in protectin' my wife, ye needn't draw the line at Ferguson and a handfu' of Kroo-boys."

Then, in a low hurried monotone as a booted foot came quickly up the gravel path:

"They're not expectin' anything to happen the night. But there's no sayin' and they'd rather be safe than sorry. Otobo's mixed up in it. And that Lali wumman."

John's brows came down like a cloud, and it was several seconds before he added:

"But the prime mover in the business is a man of N'ri. They call him Akka-Chuku. And ye know what that stands for."

"The Hand of God," Calvert interpreted thoughtfully and without a smile. "Which—" as Gibbs, the senior assistant, came up to the screen door—"is enough to be going on with."

CHAPTER VI

"WHETHER OR NO'."

CALVERT was not interested in what John had to say to Gibbs. He knew it had to do with the making of adequate preparations for the protection of the

company's property; routine business that had no bearing on the more important subject of how Calvert was going to get anything to drink on the government beach.

And when he had so rashly left his own beach that afternoon he had not anticipated being called upon to solve any problem half so difficult as this.

According to John's remark about Ferguson and the Paller beach Kroo-boys being picked up by the transport department, it was evidently the district commissioner's intention to get that far-flung responsibility off his mind at the outset, by taking the Paller beach personnel under the Government's protecting wing until such time as there was no further likelihood of it getting into trouble.

Among other things, this high-handed and unflattering course of action, expressed without any doubt whatever, what Walter Kenley thought of Calvert's ability to take care of himself and the property under his charge, and suggested to Calvert that his standing as a guest of the government was not going to be very high.

Therefore it was not at all difficult for him to assume that drinks would be few and small, if any, and that, if life were to be made even tolerable in the succeeding few days, something in the way of insurance would have to be taken out before he departed for captivity with John Todd's wife in his keeping.

It was, of course, this latter solemn and honorable charge that made defiance or escape from Kenley's edict impossible, and as he thought it over, he suspected that John had given him the assignment for just that specific purpose.

He knew if he were to give John, or even Gibbs, the senior assistant, a strictly business-like order for a supply of his favorite brandy, his signed *chit* would be accepted as seriously as if it came from the government mess. But, for any one of a dozen most plausible excuses which would be made later, the order would never be filled.

And Dilby of Marsden's, or Turner of Perkins & Gray's, would not even make a pretense of honoring Calvert's signature, and he did not bother to think of the Oil Rivers Company. Also, he knew it would be impossible to get in touch with Ferguson, at his own beach, before John Todd's wife would appear to claim his whole attention.

And afterward—

Calvert literally shuddered, and bent his eyes to his boots, which in the light of the veranda stand-lamps, glared whitely back at him. He saw, also, his new and spotless white flannel trousers, and remembered the why and the wherefore of them.

Each immaculate leg, as it were, had been purchased by a perfectly innocent wooly head into which no thought of trousers had ever entered. And because of these heads, sacrificed in the interests of decency, he was again on his way to call upon Ruth Kenley, bearing with him a credential such as he had never dreamed of.

Calvert's mouth twitched in the corners, stopped, then twitched again. But the smile did not materialize. For Calvert was far from smiling. In fact, it is doubtful if he had ever been more afraid.

His fear was no ordinary thing, of battle or bullets or of Akka Chuku's torture chamber. These were trivialities that could never make his mouth twitch nervously or his knees shake or keep him in a state of acute consciousness of every shrinking inch of his large body.

Calvert, above all else, knew Calvert. And though his fear was simply the fear of a thirst to come, it made the sound of Bella's light approaching feet ring out like a staccato pronouncement of doom.

"John!"

The name came hoarsely from between Calvert's lips just as if it had been shot from a gun, and it sounded as strange and unreal to him as it did to John himself; just as if a cringing, whispering creature inside Calvert's head, had taken sudden and unwarrranted possession of his tongue.

"What is it?" John asked, turning sharply in his direction. "What's wrong wi' ye? What are ye whisperin' like that for?"

Calvert straightened. Vaguely he was aware of Bella's appearance on the veranda, and of the fact that she had changed her dinner dress to something of white linen; and then, with a jerk, he was in full possession of himself again.

"Nothing, John," simply. "Just an idea that will keep."

He turned toward Bella, gripping his hands a little stiffly at his sides.

"All ready, Mrs. Todd? I suppose you have a uniform case or something to be——"

"The steward's takin' it down to the boat by the back door."

Calvert nodded.

"Everything all right, John?"

John's heavy eyebrows which had lowered in some doubt of Calvert's reliability, lifted again slowly. And with a muttered word to Gibbs, who immediately departed in the general direction of the Kroo-house at the back of the beach, John said briefly:

"Aye. I'll come down to the boat wi' ye."

AFTER that nothing was said until they reached the gig-wharf. Several times on the way down, Calvert's mouth opened with the intention of throwing himself upon John's none too tender mercy, but each time he decided against it, principally because of Bella and what she would be likely to think of him if he did.

There was little or no demonstration of leavetaking at the wharf. When Bella's shiny black uniform case had been placed in the gig, Calvert followed it and stood waiting to assist Bella to step aboard.

"I'll be over in maybe an hour," John said to his wife in his sonorous way. "So ye'll not need to be a bit nervous. Miss Kenley's a fine lassie, and——"

"Och, I'll manage fine," Bella assured him, and laughed in an effort to make the assurance sound genuine. "But don't be long."

Then she gave Calvert her hand and stepped daintily down into the gig.

John's eyes met Calvert's over Bella's head as she sat down; a quiet, searching look that plainly hoped he was not making any mistake. And Calvert, who was shivering inwardly as with a fever, met the look brazenly and smiled.

" 'By, John."

John nodded, grunted a most expressively skeptical "Aye," then muttered an order to the Kroo-boys to push off.

"Ye'll not be long?" Bella insisted mildly.

"No. About an hour."

And then the gig's nose was pointing toward the government beach opposite, and John was plodding methodically back to the bungalow and to the duties he owed to the firm. Not once did he turn his head, and Bella, who did not expect him to, immediately gave all her attention to Calvert.

"Is there like to be trouble?" she asked quietly enough. "Fightin' maybe?"

"Oh, no," Calvert answered deprecatingly. "Nothing as serious as that."

"Then what's John sendin' me over to stop wi' Miss Kenley for?"

"Oh, just to keep her company, while Kenley——"

"Company!"

Bella's intonation was equivalent to several volumes, and she allowed the matter to rest there as if she thought she had said all that was necessary.

"Why? Don't you like Miss Kenley?"

Bella did not commit herself. She stared into the ominous blackness down-river that was but little relieved by the occasional appearance of a thin and undecided moon; then slowly turned her head and looked in the opposite direction.

There were no canoes visible, either up or down; no sound of a paddle or the usual low droning of voices in the shadow of the bush near the trading beaches. The quiet of the day had given way to the deeper and more somber quiet of the night, and into Bella's nostrils there came again that long forgotten odor of the slaughter house.

"Are ye feared o' blood, Mr. Calvert, the sight or the smell o' it?" she asked in a most matter of fact tone.

"Blood! Why, what on earth—" Calvert laughed shortly. "What makes you ask that?"

"Because if ye are, ye'd better get out o' Allobar as quick as ye can."

Calvert almost forgot that he was thirsty and that he was going to be much thirstier. He peered at Bella from under the brim of his sun helmet, and felt just a little foolish.

"Is this prophecy or just——"

"—that imagination o' mine ye were criticising a while back. No, it's not that. It's a smell in my nose that sticks, and if it's any use to ye as a warning, I'm makin' ye a present o' it, with my best wishes."

And then, while Calvert gaped at her—"Will Miss Kenley be meetin' us at the wharf?"

"I—that is—I really don't know. Is that important?"

"Not a bit. Most like I'll be as welcome the one way as the other."

Calvert did not laugh at this; at least, not audibly. Of course, Bella was a trader's wife, and Ruth Kenley was the D. C.'s sister, and the breach between trade and government was wide and not easily bridged. But while it was accepted as a part of the daily routine among men, it had a foreign and unnatural tang when women became involved.

He thought, however, he would like to

hear more of Bella's point of view, as he was quite sure he already knew Ruth Kenley's.

"I don't think you are giving Miss Kenley a fair trial," he suggested mildly. "Have you met her often?"

"Once," most decisively.

"Just once!"

"That I remember."

"Oh." Calvert felt something like a pricked ballon. "What—that is—might I ask what that means?"

"The other times didn't make any difference."

"I see."

AFTER that the clicking of the oars in the rowlocks and the whispering splash of the blades as they dipped were the only sounds on the river.

Calvert had a great respect for Ruth Kenley and he was sure that, for some reason that was not securely founded, Bella was doing her an injustice. But, on the other hand, Bella had given him his first invitation in years, had taken him into her confidence and had, for the time being at least, reestablished him as a man among men. So that his loyalties were somewhat mixed, and as the gig neared the government beach gig-wharf, he hoped he would not find it necessary to act as peacemaker.

"I don't suppose," he began rather hesitatingly, "you will tell Miss Kenley of that—er—smell of blood you were good enough to warn me about?"

"Why should I?" Bella seemed astonished that he should think of such a thing. "I'm not a bogey-man, Mr. Calvert, goin' about frightenin' folk out o' their night's sleep. Miss Kenley'll smell it soon enough, poor lassie. And then," rather grimly, "we'll see."

"What?"

"Whether or no'."

Calvert's brows came together in a justifiably perplexed frown.

"What does that mean?"

Bella laughed and the dancing sparkle in her eyes leaped in the light of a hurricane lantern on the government beach gig-wharf as they sidled alongside.

"I'll tell ye when it happens if—" and she leaned toward him suddenly to whisper the rest of it in strictest confidence— "if ye'll keep sober."

It was Calvert's turn to laugh. But since there was every likelihood of him being compelled to keep the terms of Bella's agreement, there was little of mirth in the sound of it.

MacConnachie, of the P.W.D., who was standing on the gig-wharf in the expansive shadow of a colored sergeant of police, thought Calvert's laughter was as hollow as an empty calabash. Not that MacConnachie knew who Bella's escort was, other than that he was not John Todd. And even when Calvert stepped on to the wharf beside him, then assisted Bella to follow, MacConnachie was still guessing.

"Good evening, Mrs. Todd."

MACCONNACHIE'S greeting, like the man himself, was affable and sure. And there was never any doubt about his truly colossal assurance where a woman was concerned. In daylight or dark, MacConnachie was always nearer to his true self when there was a petticoat in the immediate vicinity, and competition served only to make him all the more interested.

He was a lean, sinewy man, just above, middle height, coal black of hair and blue of eye, with the chiseled features of a god, the ingratiating personality of a matinee idol and, so it was said in the P.W.D., the temper and fighting qualities of a wounded bush cat. Most men liked him, and though a conservative few gave him as wide a berth as possible, it was the private opinion of Walter Kenley, who, at home or abroad, would never have dreamed of inviting him to dinner, that he was the equivalent of ten men in a pinch.

So that his presence on the gig-wharf was not merely a coincidence. For the time being he had been drafted from the P.W.D. into the police department, and was acting as a kind of backbone to the river-front patrol.

Bella had no difficulty in recognizing him. Though his accent bore no kinship to that which might have been expected from a MacConnachie of Strath Kinnel, she knew he was the only man on the government beach who would have had the impertinence to say good evening to her out of the dark like that.

"Oh, hello, Mr. MacConnachie. Were ye sent down to meet me?"

"I was told to see to it that you landed

safely," he lied glibly, and tried to get a closer look at her escort. "You're going to the Kenley bungalow, of course."

"Aye," broadly. "This is Mr. Calvert of Paller & Co. Ye've met him surely."

MacConnachie's jaw dropped with a suddenness that would have been laughable if the light had been in the right position for any one to see, and his normally quick wits deserted him for a second or two as the police sergeant, who held the lantern, lifted it sharply in an instinctive effort to make sure that the white "missy-cap'n" had not made a mistake. Then as the police sergeant muttered to himself and MacConnachie tried to find his tongue, Calvert grunted:

"Hello, MacConnachie. I suppose we can tie the gig up here till I get back?"

Duty, not unmixed with expediency, brought the P.W.D. man back to himself with a snap.

"No. Tie up to the tail of the main wharf. Geddes'll show you. You'll find him—" with a wave of his hand in the general direction of the darkness that enshrouded the main wharf—"over there somewhere."

Captain Geddes, R.N.R. was the officer in charge of the transport department.

"But I don't want to keep Mrs. Todd waiting," Calvert protested mildly.

"Mrs. Todd needn't wait. If there's any baggage, get it off now, and I'll see to it that Mrs Todd reaches the Kenley bungalow in perfect safety."

Calvert did not argue. He turned toward the gig and, muttering an instruction to the second-headman who, as usual was acting as boatswain, he added definitely—

"See Cap'n Geddes before you tie up, and wait for me till I get back."

"Yessah."

Calvert turned to MacConnachie again.

"I think they have sense enough to manage a little thing like that," he said simply, and closely observed the unpleasant expression on MacConnachie's face. "Everything all right, Mrs. Todd?"

Bella giggled; a soft, irritating little sound—irritating to MacConnachie, that is—that did not improve his temper.

"Surely, Mr. Calvert," Bella said, and managed to get an intimate friendliness into her voice that was not altogether necessary. "We'll not need to put Mr. MacConnachie to the bother of showing us the way, will we?"

"I don't think so," quietly.

And then to the Kroo-boy who was hoisting Bella's uniform case on his head—

"Make quick."

MacConnachie said nothing; not so much because his notoriously quick temper choked him, as because Calvert's amazing sobriety and poise left him speechless.

"Good night, Mr. MacConnachie," Bella said sweetly.

"Oh—er—good night, Mrs. Todd."

"G'night," Calvert grunted.

" 'Night."

Calvert touched Bella's arm with his shaky finger-tips and they passed up the beach, the sergeant of police with the lantern hastening to follow and then to lead the way.

MacCONNACHIE leaned against the wharf rail, watching them until they had passed the post-office, which occupied a corner of the two-storied executive building, then thrust his hands deeply into his pockets, and stared down at Calvert's Kroo-boys, then over their inattentive heads at the black and sluggish flowing river.

"Calvert!" he muttered unbelievingly. "Calvert!"

And after a minute or so when the gig had drifted away from the wharf—

"Something's going to break, sure as ——!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

The Cableman

A Complete Novelette by Percy Charles Chandler

"Contracted for working of cables,
And steamered for seventeen seas,
For far lands of fantoms and fables,
For fair lands of indolent ease.
Sing heyl for a coral-rimm'd island,
Sing hol for a scud-driven shore;
As fades the last dim channel high land,
Look well—you may see it no more!

Don't care overmuch where they send us——"

SPEAKING broadly, they had sent Angus McGregor to the ends of all the available earth and to quite a number of the hot places between. McGregor had killed wild pigs in Morocco, lions in East Africa, and once, only once, a man-eater in Java.

For the space of the best years of a man's life he had experienced generally the same joys and sorrows, cold chills, burning fevers, heat rashes, *dhoby* itches, languor, ennui and indescribable home-sickness as his fellows, his colleagues of the entirely honorable corps of cablemen scattered about the earth.

Singularly enough, the cable companies, beneficent in other respects, have omitted to provide a sliding scale of indemnity for the scorpion sting, the *dhoby* itch and malarial fever; and as for ennui and the unparalleled conceit of wanting to go home when one is paid for sweating at ninety in the shade—why, the cablemen themselves would be the first to deny that such ills existed. They would coldly discountenance such a mushy insinuation.

Angus McGregor was a dark Gael with close-cropped hair of an astonishing blackness. He wore a mystically fierce eye and had the mien of a fighting clansman. When perturbed in spirit he soothed himself with quotations from Gaelic poetry.

An irascible temper and a gloomy temperament stamped him as a true son of his tribe. Untold generations of mountain mist and storm had bequeathed him the heritage of a face of weather-beaten ruddiness that many fevers could not make pale; and a score of years spent in lands of redundant sunshine had failed to render his complexion other than healthy brown, which must not be confused with yellow, the latter being the color more generally affected by white office-workers of overprolonged tropical residence. For the rest, McGregor might be described as a gloomy Gael. The motto of his country, "*Nemo me impune lacessit*," appropriately surmounted by the thistle, rampant, might well have been his own personal motto. And yet, such a bald description would be grossly unfair to McGregor. For he reveled in the sports and pastimes of the distant stations, and no real sportsman is a boor. Where others sailed their small yachts in the bay McGregor sought the open sea.

On one occasion he had turned up at

Cadiz after a very choppy passage in a leaky twelve-foot yawl through the Straits from Gibraltar. He had overlooked the formality of sailing papers and had been arrested as a prospective smuggler, and he had forgotten the detail of duty, which very nearly lost him his job; but perhaps this incident will explain as well as anything else why McGregor was popular with his sport-loving colleagues.

They never understood him, but they felt honored in filling in his duty *gratis* on his frequent unannounced lapses from the same. They took no liberties with him and respected his gloomy moods by tactfully avoiding him. But when moodiness gave place to the rare smile of approval after the well-fought set at tennis or the body-wearing *shikar* through the steaming jungle —a fierce and warlike smile—then those who played or hunted with McGregor felt themselves rewarded indeed.

And before mentioning McGregor's weakness it must be stated that, apart from the economical loss consequent on the frequency with which he lost his job, this weakness seemed to have no permanently bad effect on him whatever. His physique was the admiration of the younger men, the secret envy of his seniors; and his stamina on the day-long hunt had made famous the name of McGregor from Mombasa to the Malay Peninsula. And if not so tall by a full foot as the seven-foot skeletons of his Fingalian ancestors that have been dug up from the bogs of Connemara, Argyllshire and Skye, McGregor possessed a stature of bone and brawn at once rugged, useful and aggressive, and a pair of phenomenally hard knees invaluable for shoving in rugby scrums.

In short, McGregor was the embodiment of an anachronism: The survival of a proud and primitive Ossianic warrior into the prosaic paltriness of this decadent century. Circumstances might compel him to earn a living according to modern ideas, but he lived in the heroic, mysterious past.

In a land where the precipitation of water in the atmosphere is so dense as in Scotland what should be more natural than for the natives to drink oft and copiously of the usquebaugh, the water of life, Nature's own antidote for this deplorable climatic condition, as it were? McGregor had never been able to understand quite why the same quantity of the same brand of genuine Scots whisky, merely conducive to a sense of physical well-being and pleasant exhilaration in his native Rossshire, should be capable of knocking him into a state of total coma and complete mental inertia in, let us say, Roncador.

Indeed, it may be said that this matter constituted the great riddle of life for McGregor; and through all the years of his foreign service, with the obstinacy of the true Highlander who never admits defeat, he had been engaged in trying to solve it. The results, though disastrous from the viewpoint of permanency of employment, were conducive to much travel. The cable companies are few in number, and it was inevitable that McGregor should invade America sooner or later.

II

RONCADOR is one of those countries of Latin America popularly known as a "backward" republic. Financially speaking, it was very backward, for Roncador had not paid its bill to the American cable company for a long, long time—since January, 1897, to be exact. However, the company refrained from pressing unduly for payment. Their station at Cangrejo Point near the capital, Mangrovia, was a vitally necessary link in the chain of cables connecting New York with the larger, more lucrative stations of the republics farther south. And the Latin Americans, nationally as well as individually, are so very, very touchy—— McGregor had a little difficulty in explaining to the manager why it had taken him two days to get from the dock to the cable office. He arrived in a state of Gaelic-*cum*-prickly heat, complaining that the cab—they still use the quaint old horse cab in Mangrovia —had broken down.

Cable operators are paid by the month, and the little matter of two days lost (to the company) did not therefore affect McGregor in the least. In the sanctuary of his private office the manager ruefully admitted to himself that his new man smelled strongly of liquor. And two days was a bit thick for a journey that should not have taken twenty minutes.

But Mr. Hobbs was a wise manager in his generation. He had learned by bitter experience that his own record with the company depended largely on the smooth

running of his station. The fewer the complaints, the better the record, and *vice versa*. The company did not want, nay they absolutely refused to be worried with complaints from third-rate tropical stations.

The head office merely required results, which is, of course, a nasty habit with companies and corporations. The company found it increasingly difficult to get competent operators for their tropical stations. Surely Mr. Hobbs realized that? And, positively, it was of no interest whatever to the company whether their men preferred rum or root beer as a beverage.

However, Mr. Hobbs was agreeably surprized the first time he saw McGregor at work. McGregor could work anything appertaining to the business of telegraphy with about fifty per cent. more of efficiency and fifty per cent. less fuss than the average operator. He could tickle anything in the shape of a key and read anything remotely resembling a signal, get a balance or put on a siphon, and work any apparatus from the obsolete single needle and mirror down to the most modern contraptions of siphon-recorders, relays and electrical typewriter slip perforator.

True, he had one little argument with Mr. Hobbs; a few words about the matter of his "bite;" but McGregor won his point.

Mr. Hobbs was of the opinion that "bites" were always taken sitting down at the dining table, but the new operator preferred his standing up. That his "bite" was entirely a liquid one was surely the affair of no man but McGregor; and that it bit him thrice in rapid succession as he stood at the bar of the *cantina* El Capricho was likewise nobody's business but his own.

Even when the new man disappeared altogether for three days after receiving his first pay Mr. Hobbs was able to overlook the matter. And although the erring McGregor capped this exploit by wiring his manager from an obscure village of the interior, complaining that he had been robbed and kidnaped, and required fifty dollars immediately for the first instalment of his ransom, Mr. Hobbs only smiled grimly, and sent the money. The purely European section of the Great War had lately started, and a surprizing number of operators were disappearing from the foreign stations in the general direction of Europe.

Operators were getting scarcer every day, preferring, strangely enough, the horrors of the trenches to the soft delights of such countries as Roncador. For this and other reasons Mr. Hobbs contented himself with admonishing the kidnaped operator never to again indulge in the luxury of such a prolonged kidnaping.

Mr. Hobbs had taken quite a liking to McGregor; had a fellow feeling for him, as one good workman to another; and even went to the trouble of enumerating, extra-officially, the more respectable *cantinas* of Mangrovia as resorts where one would be least likely to suffer the danger of kidnaping

And in this benign fashion, with the occasional lapse from the straight and dry path tactfully credited to "sickness," McGregor passed his first year in Cangrejo Point.

Mr. Hobbs had a secret trouble: His failure to collect the debt due the company from the government. The officials interviewed about this matter were always most polite. But they invariably pointed out to Mr. Hobbs the impossibility of paying the debt, due to the failure of the chicle crop, or the sisal crop, or the palm oil crop, or the banana crop—a different crop in each year—the disastrous state of the republic's finances, due to the war and many other causes; and said that no doubt, if all went well, they would be able to pay next year.

Mr. Hobbs was a conscientious man, and his failure to collect a cent after six years' hard trying worried him considerably. He had married a lady of the country, and she had presented him with two beautiful children; had built himself a palatial residence on the heights overlooking the city; and was the proud possessor of an automobile. But that was not the half of it. The dowry of the Señora Hobbs included, besides a substantial account at the bank, a very productive cocoa hacienda in the interior; and Mr. Hobbs was even now engaged in developing this property to a point where he expected still greater profits from it in the near future. Without exaggeration it may be said that the manager of the cable office had jumped right out of the merely salaried class into the aristocratic landowning class, all in the short space of six years.

If skeptically minded persons should believe this to be an impossibility, then they ought to permit themselves the opportunity to take a good look at certain sections of

Latin America. Only, if subsequently locating in those delectable latitudes, they should avoid the lure of strong drink—a devilish mocker of weak gringoes in the tropics.

And one day Mr. Hobbs received the letter he had been dreading. A letter of most polite wording but unmistakable portent from the head office, informing the recipient that he would be transferred to a distant station of the company in six weeks. Of course, if Mr. Hobbs should be able to collect even a portion of the debt owed the company, say one-half of it, then the matter of the transfer would be reconsidered.

In his bitterness Mr. Hobbs did a thing that no manager should do. He showed the letter to McGregor, that gentleman having entered his office at this juncture for the purpose of obtaining a small advance on salary.

"Just ten dollars, ye ken, sir, till pay day."

"Read that letter," said Mr. Hobbs to McGregor. "That's what a man gets after serving this company half a lifetime." The operator read the letter and was appropriately sympathetic. McGregor liked his manager, and felt sincerely sorry for him. Mr. Hobbs would either have to sell out everything he owned in Roncador, and at a tremendous loss, or he would have to resign his position with the company, and all the benefits of the prestige and pension that went with that position.

III

TO SAY that McGregor's numerous firings were due to booze would be an injustice. The booze was, so to speak, merely an accessory to the fact. The real reason was restlessness. The cableman was the prototype of the tramp in Kipling's "Sestina:"

> "Pay couldn't 'old me when my time was done,
> For something in my 'ead upset it all."

Except that in McGregor's case the detail as to whether his time was done or not worried him not at all. Of late something had been making him strangely restless. More so than usual. The war? No, not entirely the war, but something that went even deeper.

Ah, he had it! Life in these new-fangled republics was not a bit like the life he had known in the glamourous East. In the East a white man was respected, whereas here he was barely tolerated. In India the cablemen had been treated as the equals of the rulers of the land, had partaken of all that social life offers there: Princely hospitality, bridge, dances, sport, hunting, gymkhanas, but here in these —— fandango republics any coffee-colored *fortinguero* was as good as a white man. Curse their blasted democracy!

Introspection overtook McGregor, and his mournfulness increased daily. It was a Sunday afternoon when the perturbed spirit of the exile sought the solace of music.

The staff were scattered about the countryside, bathing or picknicking, as is the custom of cablemen on Sundays in the lands of the perennial summer. McGregor took possession of the abandoned smoking room. He sat down at the piano, carefully depositing a bottle of whisky within easy reach. With ineffable sadness he played the laments of every clan in the Highlands. With stern ecstasy he played the lament of his own clan, "Lochaber no more." With sudden ferocity he turned on the quicksteps of his native heath, groaning with inward anguish as he played, and drinking heavily all the while. And then McGregor sang.

The cable messes from Porthcurnow to Port Darwin knew what McGregor's singing portended. It was the warning sign that his spirit was troubled, that all life had grown stale and unprofitable, that his heart was in the Highlands. And it was the prelude to the jag, the absence from duty—and the inevitable firing.

McGregor sang "My Ain Folk." Whoever has not heard a sentimental Scot sing "My Ain Folk," when several thousand miles removed from those folk, and when the singer by the aid of much liquor has achieved the raptured intensity and mellow enunciation of the true whisky-tenor voice, does not know real emotion.

It grew dark in the smoking room. Men were returning from the beach, from a picnic to the mango groves of Supaypongo. McGregor left the piano and fled out into the night. His dolor was too profound for the paltry amenities. He disappeared, no one knows where, for the space of one full week.

At the end of that time he returned—to discover that he had been discharged. This sort of thing is known in the cable service as

"firing yourself." A well disposed manager can wink at an absence of a day or so, but a prolonged absence can not be overlooked. The manager would be jeopardizing his own position if he tried to hide such a discrepancy.

Mr. Hobbs had been reluctantly compelled to report McGregor as "missing." Such reports are made by service telegram, and a wired reply had been quickly forthcoming. McGregor had irrevocably "fired himself." And being without funds—his usual state—he found himself very literally "on the beach."

To be out of a job in one's own country is bad enough, but to be out of a job in one of the small and backward republics is a different proposition entirely. There are no big corporations or commercial houses in Mangrovia. And there is a decided prejudice against gringoes. Not that one firing more or less was to dismay McGregor in his present state. He decided that he needed a good sleep and betook him to his room in the quarters.

When he awoke the following morning it was to the sound of a most appalling clamor from the street beyond the wall marking the boundary of the cable company's domain on the outskirts of Mangrovia. From that direction came the confused murmur of a large crowd, interspersed with occasional loud and defiant shouting. From the distance of the city proper came the rattle of rifle-firing.

Little Perkins rushed unceremoniously into McGregor's room.

"It's the revolution at last!" shouted Perkins.

McGregor knew not a thing about any revolution.

"Didn't you know?" queried Perkins. "Yes—the revolution. They've been planning it for months. The Liberals have been in too long. The Conservatives are fed up with living on bananas. Now they mean to take a turn at the graft. Those guys in the road are some of the Conservatives—revolutionists. Trying to get into the town from our side. Shouldn't be surprized if we get some shells dropping round here pretty soon."

Perkins rambled on, but McGregor was no longer listening. A new and delightful interest obsessed him. An interest that harmonized most amazingly with the restless soul of him, with the feverish surgings of his physical being. The wild heart of the Gael began to experience a queer, reckless feeling of affinity with this revolution business.

Mr. Hobbs was most apologetic when settling with McGregor, but to the manager's intense surprize the operator seemed to be in the best of a good humor about the matter.

"It's all right, Mr. Hobbs," said the Scot. "I desairve it—just gie me the little pay envelop and let me go."

Mr. Hobbs was moved to make a remark about the business that had been worrying him.

"Just my luck," he observed. "Just my luck—this revolution cropping up when I was going to make one more good effort to collect the government debt. Now, with the whole place turned upside down in the throes of a revolution I have as much chance of collecting as of finding a needle in a haystack.

"And what gets me mad is the fact that the government have right at this moment five million dollars in good American money in the treasury, and might have paid the half a million owing to the company. Might have paid it out without a murmur—and now this cursed revolution spoils my plans altogether.

"The company have promised me ten per cent. cash commission if I can collect. That's a cool fifty thousand, but I would willingly pay that amount to anybody effecting the collection just for the pleasure of keeping my position here with the company. My whole life is centered in this country, and if I can't collect the debt within the next month it will mean either giving up my job or leaving Roncador."

McGregor could think of nothing to say.

As the discharged operator strode across the stretch of lawn separating office from quarters he began to utter a warlike chant. A weird chant of short, unintelligible sentences, which from the fervor of the utterance would seem to have been some prayer or incantation in a foreign tongue.

IV

WHEN McGregor was himself he spoke the perfect English of the educated Scot; when excited or perturbed he spoke broad Glaswegian; and when uplifted, as he now was, he lapsed into

Gaelic, the pure Gaelic that he had imbibed with his mother's milk.

Gaelic soothed his troubled spirit now. The Sassenachs and other nondescript races might own the earth; might treat him, Angus McGregor, as a chattel to be bandied about hither and thither, hired with their sordid dross, fired because he had not yet solved the question of the whisky and its relation to tropical solarization but, by great Godfrey, King of Argyll! they could not take away from him the glorious heritage of his superiority, his racial superiority to them all! The greatest, the finest, the bravest, the most scholarly race under the sun!

And as he crammed his scanty belongings into an absurdly small trunk in his room he continued the chant. The Gaelic chant of the very poetic lines credited through the mists of the centuries to Ossian. The Ossian who some say never existed, who others swear by. Sufficient unto McGregor his native tongue, his native bard, the grandeur of simplicity in the lines that soothed his troubled soul with the mighty prowess of gigantic, fighting ancestors.

A tremendous burst of musketry sounded from the street beyong the wall. The native servants of the quarters had long since hidden themselves, operators were seriously debating the necessity of repairing to the protection of their respective consulates, and a general cessation of activities seemed imminent within the cable domain—but McGregor merely snorted disdainfully and chanted on:

"The shout of the hosts on the shoulders of the mountains
Was a torrent in a night of storm
When bursts the cloud on glenny Cona,
And a thousand ghosts are shrieking aloud
On the viewless crooked wind of the cairns."

Of a sudden the loud report of a bursting shell and the crash of falling masonry added new menace to the scene. As McGregor peered through his jalousies he could see men with shocking wounds being led away by their hysterical womenfolk; some of the wounded, falling in the blazing sunshine of the road, being ministered to and dying where they had lain them down. More shells fell, and soon a heavy pall of smoke covered the road, its dead and living, quarters and garden alike.

McGregor finished packing. He sought and found a panic-stricken janitor, enjoining him on pain of flaying to take charge of the trunk until it should be called for. He then made his way to the deserted billiard room, removing from its place on the wall a beautifully carved machete in an ornamental scabbard. McGregor drew and tested the blade. He amused himself for a few seconds making rapid passes at imaginary foes around him. He threw away the useless scabbard. To an accompaniment of intermittently bursting shells and shattering débris he fell into a shouting defiance of Ossianic verse:

"Arise my thousands in the field,
Pour as the roar of the ocean,
When bends the blast from the cloud,
Let gallant Lochlin rise around my steel.
Be ye like rocks on the edge of the ocean,
In my own land of oars,
That lifts the pine aloft
To battle with the tempests of the sky."

The time for the soothing of the racial susceptibilities was past; the moment for racial asseveration had arrived, the proving of the claymores of the clans. McGregor made his way to the street. A now silent street of pitiful aspect, for the living had fled the terror of the shells, and those who had stayed were dead. And with a glance of gloomy truculence that comprehended all earth, sea and sky he set out for the city; a brawny figure of scowling, uncompromising aspect lurching an unimpeded way through deserted streets. In his right hand he held the naked machete as lightly as if it were a toothbrush.

V

DON MARTIN CUMBANCHERO owned about the half of the Province of Camarones. He was the wealthiest *hacendado* in the country, a power in the land, and the permanent and unchallenged senior Conservative senator from his province. The Cumbanchero family had given half a dozen presidents to Roncador. To be more exact that family had taken the presidency unto itself in the approved style of the backward republics; and Don Martin had lately arrived at the conclusion that the time had come to honor the country yet again with a Cumbanchero for chief executive.

If the wealth of the Cumbancheros lay in cocoa, their political strength rested principally upon the unswerving loyalty

of their negro peons. The Naranjito machete men, *los macheteros de Naranjito*, as they are fearsomely famous to all Roncador, are retainers of the Cumbancheros. They are invariably ready to take part in any fight or foray suggested by their overlords, only too willing to exchange the monotony of working on the plantations for the delightful excitements of revolution, the subsequent rewards attending the reversal of the suffrage by force of arms.

Scarce a man of the *macheteros* measures less than six feet in height, and their dexterity with the machete is a terrible, phenomenal thing to see. The *macheteros* scorn the rifle, or if the rifle should obtrude itself unpleasantly on their notice in the course of the fight, they are willing to make use of it—to break over the heads of the enemy. In vain have succeeding administrations of the Liberal persuasion endeavored to offset this military terror by the importation of quick-firing guns, field guns, foreign experts to direct the army and foreign military instructors to teach it how to fight.

The machete men have no uniforms, no banners, no rifles. But they are imbued with a fiendish delight for the leaping glories of the machete charge, and possessed of a quality of heavy striking muscularity and rapidity in carrying out the same that have never failed to overcome such details as are comprehended in the military lore and vainly-instilled *esprit de corps* of the regular Roncadorian regiments. They are the shock troops *par excellence*, the mighty men of valor without peer, and the manner of their warfare is not written in any military textbook.

In a certain spacious walled garden on the outskirts of Mangrovia, opposite to the side of the city where lies the domain of the cable company, Don Martin Cumbanchero and his *macheteros* rested. Or rather, Don Martin rested at his ease in the saloon of the hotel adjoining the garden; rested very much at his ease with an iced *refresco* before him on the table, a bartender at his elbow, a very scared hotel manager hovering around him to see that every wish of the terrible chief of the *macheteros* should be carrried out on the instant.

The *macheteros* lay at their ease in the shade of the trees outside. They had marched thirty miles the preceding night, and followed up that feat by driving detachments of troops from sundry barracks and other fortified places during the heat of an exceedingly hot morning.

The government troops had been driven from every point except one, but that one point was more important than all the others together, the one position that it was imperative to capture before the revolution could be proclaimed accomplished: The treasury building. The treasury building, with five million dollars in its vaults, the greatest prize in the country. Without money the revolution could not hope to succeed. Don Martin sat and pondered the matter in the dim silence of the large hotel saloon. Doors were barred, shutters were down, all possibility of any interruption from the outside world cut off, seemingly—when a terrifying noise as of a stick being drawn against the corrugations of the metal shutters outside brought the revolutionary commander to his feet.

"Who is that?" he shouted. "Who dares to disturb *el Comandante de los macheteros?* Open the door that I may shoot this *muy atrevido* dead."

The hotel manager, his knees threatening to give way under him in access of fear, ran to unbar the door. The *comandante* drew a large automatic pistol, the bartender furtively swallowed a stiff cognac to steel himself against this terrible sight—and Mr. Angus McGregor reeled genially into the obscurity of the saloon.

"Mixsh us a good one, old stiff!" shouted McGregor to the bartender. "Mixsh ye'sel' one. Serve 'em up ev'ybody. Celebrate revolush'n!"

It was at once apparent that McGregor was stricken with a most deplorable inebriation. He embraced the manager effusively, while that individual endeavored with many gesticulations to explain to Don Martin that the newcomer was a good friend of his, a foreigner, a person entirely unconnected with the revolution, and a valued client withal. The manager directed the attention of his valued client to the person of Don Martin.

"The next President of Roncador!" he proclaimed, but his tones lacked enthusiasm.

Don Martin sat down disgustedly, his back on the intruder. He turned his head a few minutes later to see McGregor demonstrating to the bartender the corrct Highland manner of parrying and cutting with the claymore.

The sight infuriated him, and he got up from where he sat.

"You know how to use the machete, eh?" said he sarcastically. "By your accent you are Scotch, no? Your petticoated soldiers are great fighters, it is said. Well, come with me, and I'll show you a fight!"

He spoke contemptuously. McGregor was quick to see the studied insult of the words. To this day the good inhabitants of Mangrovia are hazy as to whether Don Martin spoke in jest or not. But that he could not have said a thing better calculated to inflame the ire of one solitary Scot is beyond question for those who know McGregor. Vanished the maudlin good humor, the doddering affectedness.

The Gael turned on Don Martin, his face white with fury. He spoke in Spanish and his voice was cold as a shower of iced water. In biting tones he informed the revolutionary commander that as he, McGregor, was a descendant of the Scottish kings, he could only accept the offer to assist the rabble that passed for a revolutionary army —as a leader.

Indeed, he could not permit himself to enter the fray unless fighting in the forefront of the battle, as befitted the scion of a race of princely warriors. A race that had turned the Romans back from the sacred soil of unconquered and unconquerable Scotland when the country known as Spain was a mere Roman colony, her allegedly proud people groveling under the sway of the Cæsars, as they had later groveled for eight hundred years under the subjection of the Moors—the black Moors.

McGregor said many other things, some of which can not be printed, for he had a sarcastic speech and was absolutely fearless of any consequences.

It was the turn of Don Martin to grow white with rage. He bit his lip, while the hotel manager trembled for the fate of the intrepid Scotchman. But Don Martin was a man of some education and had traveled considerably. Had he been merely an ignorant native bursting with the insensate pride of the moron who knows no country but his own it is reasonable to suppose that McGregor would have died then and there.

Don Martin had been educated at a famous English public school and an equally famous American university. He had learned to take the hard cuff and the rough and tumble of the gridiron—in itself an education for the Latin youth. With the subtle intuition of his race he had learned something about this other strange race, this Nordic race, and with this understanding had come appreciation and respect for that race. His thoughts flew back to a famous schoolmaster who had on a certain occasion demonstrated to him the utter futility of losing his temper, and a slow smile spread over his swarthy face. The gringo should have his way. He turned to McGregor.

"Come on then," said he, "I will give you an opportunity to fight, and we shall see if you can scrap as fiercely as you talk."

He spoke in perfect English, and this of itself was sufficient to arouse McGregor's curiosity.

"We are now going to attack the treasury building," continued Don Martin, "and you and I shall lead the charge."

He turned to leave, followed by a thoroughly perplexed Scotchman.

VI

IN ORDER to reach the road from the garden it was necessary to climb a low wall. The *macheteros* had already formed up in the street beyond. As the two men mounted the wall and stood together atop it the revolutionary leader placed his arm about McGregor's shoulder. It was a gesture of great significance at such a time, and every man of the *macheteros* saw it, marveling.

Don Martin spoke.

"*Macheteros!*" he shouted. "This descendant of the Scottish kings will lead my little ones into battle. See that he comes to no harm."

He was about to add something to this speech when the loud report of a rifle rang out, and even as the men answered their leader's words with a shout McGregor felt Don Martin sway. Nobody knew where the ball came from that hit the Don, but as the cableman lifted the wounded leader down to his men in the road, and they bore him tenderly to the nearest house, the machete men wailed forebodingly and their eyes rolled with ominous portent of a terrible impending revenge.

A group of men approached McGregor. It seemed they craved orders of some kind. Very well, they should have them.

"Tell the men we attack at once," said McGregor briefly to a tall young negro who answered to the name of Evaristo, and who seemed to be the nearest approach to an officer that he could see.

He was later to learn that the *macheteros* boasted no officers. When a word of command was given to any one of them, that man passed the word on to the others. McGregor chose Evaristo to do this, and for the time being Evaristo became his right-hand man.

"Which way do we attack, *Comandante?* queried Evaristo. *Comandante!* Without a doubt the machete men had taken their wounded chief's words very literally indeed. McGregor glanced around at a score of black and shining faces. Every eye was directed at him. He expected to see a grin of amusement somewhere, searched for it —and found it not. A sudden access of military understanding seemed to descend upon McGregor. He felt that he had been doing this sort of thing all his life.

"We attack the treasury building. We carry it *al asalto*—and at once!" he found himself shouting to the assembled *macheteros*, dispensing with Evaristo for the moment.

A howl of approval echoed down the column. A howl that caused the local landed gentry barricaded in their houses for twelve blocks around to cower in closets and other secret places.

The *macheteros* were on the warpath once more!

Other orders followed in quick succession. Twelve men would remain to guard the house in which Don Martin lay. Six men would get the nearest doctor . . . no, the nearest half a dozen doctors . . . break in their houses and bring them by force, if necessary, to wait upon the fallen chief.

"Forward, by the right—*adelante!*"

The sweating column moved through the deserted streets like a writhing snake. They marched in fours, sixes and eights. They pranced out of line and on to sidewalks in leg-shaking dances performed by twos and threes. They swelled into animated jumping crowds circling about in the road, debating among themselves as to which of their number should provide the personal bodyguard of the descendant of the Scottish kings. Only McGregor remained calm, marching at their head, with Evaristo one pace right flank rear.

Calm? Yes—outwardly so, like a true Scotchman refusing to let the world see his thoughts, though a surging warriorhood glowed in every fiber of his rugged frame. The glow, the "first fine rapture" of command nearly overcame him. All the years of his life had been spent in taking orders from other people; but here, at a moment's notice, so to speak, he found himself in the position of having a thousand fighting giants at his orders. Not merely that, but by virtue of their fighting prowess McGregor had become the virtual leader of the revolution.

Other revolutionary troops there were, of course; but McGregor had heard that the others were as naught beside the *macheteros*. These were the backbone of the revolution, as their chieftain, Don Martin, was the acknowledged leader of the movement. And the most remarkable thing about it all was the fact that McGregor knew he could lead these men, could lead any men.

He knew he could never sit in any office again, or take any orders from any one. If he ever got out of this alive he must make it his business to get back to Scotland, to join that other army over there. He wondered if they would take a man of forty-two years. A bit bent by booze and the tropics, no doubt, but husky, without an ounce of fat on him, able to march—and fight.

Ah, fight! They were halting now. Evaristo had given the order.

"What are we halting for?" demanded McGregor.

"The fighting, *mi Comandante*, it is just around that corner," replied the negro. "Permit Evaristo to scout a little."

Evaristo scouted, and at considerable risk to his skin. He returned a few minutes later with the news that the government were holding the treasury building with great determination. There were machine-guns in the *portales*, and riflemen at every window.

The revolutionary forces under the command of General Troncoso were in possession of the streets surrounding the building, and were directing a desultory fire against it, but they would achieve nothing that way. To tell the truth this General Troncoso, although supposed to be of the revolutionary party, was secretly jealous of Don Martin. Troncoso would grab the presidency himself if he could. Especially would he do so if he were aware that Don Martin had been

wounded. These and many other things McGregor learned.

"So the *macheteros* appear now," concluded Evaristo simply, "and carry the place." He spoke without affectation, as if the matter of winning out were a foregone conclusion. "Three blocks onward and we are at the north end of the Plaza de la Inquisicion. The treasury building is at the south end."

The column resumed its march. Sounds of firing grew louder. The column arrived at the corner of the square. McGregor peered round. He was not going to let any man of that crowd precede him in this charge. An immense stretch of open square lay before him. Evaristo pointed out the object of their assault. It lay diagonally across the square, a full two hundred yards distant. McGregor could see the sun glinting on the muzzles of the machine-guns behind their sandbag barricades.

A bandstand in the center and a few statues scattered about the plaza promised some slight protection against the bullets of the enemy for the first hundred yards. After that there would be no protection whatever. It was a proposition to make even a seasoned soldier think seriously, but McGregor was a wild Gael. He glanced at Evaristo significantly. The latter nodedd.

"Yes, it is time to start; there is no sense in delay," said he.

"Then to the charge!" shouted the leader; and without waiting to look whether the others followed he leaped from the shelter of the street into full view of the enemy at the opposite end of the vast plaza. But the machete men were close behind. They swarmed into the tracks of the fiery Scotchman like bees vacating a hive. They sped across the stone-flagged square like athletes in a hundred yards dash.

Fully ten seconds passed before the enemy opened fire on this new menace, so suddenly did it appear, and by that time the *macheteros* had won to the bandstand. McGregor found himself sliding around the base of a statue and emerging directly before about six machine-guns. Each one of them seemed to point straight at him. A sea of negroes surged behind him, about him, on top of him, threatened to stamp him out of existence. The gleaming whites of eyes and teeth, the scintillating of many blades made bright the air about him.

He shouted to them to keep behind him, not to dare pass him, but they merely grinned. He was borne along on the crest of a wave. A bobbing black-crested wave with a white undertow of cotton-print trousers. Bullets could not stop these men. He saw them bowled over and spun around by the impact of the heavy Mannlicher bullet, only to rise again and continue the charge. He saw them sprayed by the deadly spray of the machine-guns at ten yards' range, saw them fling their machetes as they died, defiantly deriding the suddenness of the weakness they could not comprehend.

McGregor saw the steps of the treasury building before him, and as he essayed to leap them with legs weakened by the unaccustomed exertion of this appalling two hundred yards' dash, felt himself lifted from behind by men whose legs were not in any wise weak.

From the protection of a stone column in a corner one machine-gun fired its deadly hail. McGregor flung his machete at the gunners. The hilt of the weapon struck one of them in the mouth, stunning him. McGregor followed the machete with a leap. He leaped blindly on gun and guncrew like a tackling back at rugby, smothering them.

He found himself lifted from this ignominious scramble by an admiring trio of his men. His machete was returned to him with obeisances. The *macheteros* were vain about their leaping, and immediately recognized McGregor as one of themselves by this peculiarity. The government vacated the treasury building in great disorder. The *macheteros* stood magnanimously aside, allowing other revolutionary troops to take possession of the building.

Evaristo approached McGregor, saluting.

"See," said he hotly, "there goes General Troncoso. Do not let these rats obtain the fruits of the victory we have won for Don Martin."

McGregor was touched by the unswerving loyalty of the man to his wounded chief.

"Come, let us go into the building," continued Evaristo. "There will be a council of war—and in the absence of Don Martin it is likely this Troncoso will try to obtain the presidency."

McGregor understood. He called a score of the *macheteros* to his side.

"There is no time to advise Don Martin of the state of affairs," he said. "We must take things into our own hands. Will you fight that rabble if necessary?"

The *macheteros* would fight anybody if the descendant of the Scottish kings decreed it.

"Good. Evaristo, and you, and you come with me. The rest of you gather the *macheteros*, and stand by in case I need you."

And selecting his men Angus McGregor strode into the large hall where a council of war was even then assembling under the leadership of General Troncoso.

VII

GENERAL TRONCOSO was a largely flabby personage with a pockmarked face of unhealthy gray color. His very size gave him a commanding presence in that assembly of undersized men, but McGregor noted with secret satisfaction that he had knock-knees and puffed like a grampus with the merest exertion of rising to speak.

"One good slam in the bread-basket——and he's oot," breathed that wary person to himself as he took up a position by the door, where his identity was merged in the obscurity of the half dozen machete men surrounding him.

Evaristo had surmised correctly. No sooner did Troncoso start his speech than it became apparent he was about to press his own claims to the presidency. In such a supine assembly it seemed that he would be able to do so successfully. McGregor knew enough Spanish to follow the drift of the general's talk. He whispered a short sentence to Evaristo. The latter nodded.

McGregor did not say "Good afternoon," or waste any time in futile formalities. Goethe says somewhere: "Boldness has genius, power and magic in it; what you can do, or dream you can, begin it!" McGregor began it. He advanced to the head of the table and stood slightly behind the General.

Very rudely he interrupted that individual's flow of language.

"Don Martin Cumbanchero, President of Roncador," he announced in a loud voice, "gives orders that you wait upon him. No assembly can be legal without the presence of Don Martin. This conference is unauthorized and is hereby ordered to dissolve, adjourn, vamoose!"

Troncoso turned hotly on his interrupter.

"Since when do the leaders of the republic take their orders from maldito *gringoes*—and wounded men?" he asked.

McGregor hesitated not one instant.

"*Macheteros!*" he shouted, "arrest every man in this assembly!"

Even as he spoke the cableman started the arresting. He caught the unwieldy Troncoso by the collar, upsetting him backward. Before the General had reached the ground McGregor had relieved him of both sword and revolver. One of the guards took Troncoso into custody. The descendant of the Scottish kings leaped on the table. In his leap he waved his machete perilously about the heads of the assembled leaders. They cowered before him in terror.

And McGregor shouted—but this time it was a song, the lilting cavalry-time song of "Bonnie Dundee."

"To the Lords of Convention 'twas Claverhouse spoke:
'Ere the king's crown be ta'en there are crowns to be broke,
So come all ye men who love honor and me,
And follow the Bonnets of Bonnie Dundee."

It is sad to have to tell the truth—but McGregor had been drinking again. He had been relieving the thirst resultant upon the exertions of the afternoon by imbibing freely from the flasks of his men. The flasks contained *aguardiente*. *Aguardiente*, of the Roncadorian home-distilled variety, is a very potent liquor indeed.

"Come fill up your cup and fill up your can,
And bring up your horses and bring up your men,
And open your west port and let us gang free—
For it's room for the Bonnets of Bonnie Dundee!"

During this outburst the machete described wild sweeps about the heads of the seated revolutionaries, and as McGregor shrieked out the last line of frenzied defiance, he fell from the table, carried away by the whirling of his own blade.

The faithful *macheteros* lifted him to his feet. They then proceeded to arrest the members of the assembly, but those gentlemen were loud in protesting their adherence to Don Martin—when they saw how the matter lay.

"Very well," said McGregor, "I will overlook the fact that you have all been caught participating in this illegal conference if you go now to report to Don Martin."

The party of generals, field-marshals and admirals were grateful. Accompanied by

a largely grinning guard of machete men they crossed the plaza. McGregor led them, conversing facetiously with General Troncoso. He had decided not to let that gentleman out of his sight. He surmised that Don Martin would know best how to deal with him. Troncoso preserved a moody silence as the others crowded about the Scotchman. They vied one with the other in their efforts to demonstrate how loyal they were to Don Martin, jostling each other in order to obtain McGregor's ear.

That gentleman remained entirely unconcerned. He smoked a cigar ostentatiously presented by a prospective Minister of Finance, and took an occasional pull at a silver flask held obligingly at his disposal by a would-be Secretary of State.

VIII

DON MARTIN CUMBANCHERO was unanimously elected President of the sovereign republic of Roncador. Whether the *macheteros* had anything to do with the unanimity is purely a matter of conjecture, but it is significant that that corps of persuasive machete swingers took unobtrusive possession of the *Camara de Representantes* during the voting.

Evaristo reported faithfully to his now partially recovered chief on the many military and tactical virtues of the descendant of the Scottish kings. Don Martin was a generous man. He sent for McGregor. The Scotchman could have any post he desired in the new government. Would he care for position of Director-General of Communications? As a telegraphist McGregor appreciated the honor of the invitation to manage the postal and telegraphic system of the republic, but declined the offer. He explained that bad health necessitated his returning to the ancestral castle of his forefathers in far away Scotland.

However—yes, there was one little thing the President could do for him: The matter of the quite insignificant debt owing to the cable company, a mere trifle of about half a million dollars, too small a sum to trouble such a busy man with. And he would not have mentioned it at all were it not that the cable company had charged him, Angus McGregor, with the collection of this account.

What would you? Even the lineal descendant of the heroic warrior Cuchullin had fallen under the necessity of earning a living in these prosaic times—but as a common debt collector! The thought was unbearable! McGregor nearly wept with self-pity at the thought of this disgrace. Don Martin implored his friend to bear up under the indignity. Come, come! The money would be paid that very day.

Figuratively speaking, Mr. Hobbs fell upon McGregor's neck when he heard the good news. He was too overcome with emotion to speak. The cableman was a true Scot as well as a warlike Gael.

"Ye'll no be forgettin' the little matter of the commission, sir?" Mr. Hobbs was a gentleman. The payment of the commission would be his first care.

McGregor imparted some of his innermost yearnings to the manager. That money would come in fine for buying a small estate in his native Rossshire. He knew the very place—had known it since he was a kid. There was a trout stream, a moor where you could shoot grouse, a small farm on the hillside with the finest shaggy-red Highland cattle. He would settle down there—

"Get marrit, ye ken, an' a' that sairt o' foolishness."

BUT as Angus McGregor stood at the steamer's rail watching the warm seas of Roncador disappear with tessellations of gold and amber into the red of the setting sun he knew that he was going home for just another vacation. Not to stay there, never to settle down. He knew he was utterly incapable of settling down anywhere. There would be the war, of course.

The excitements of war will serve his impatient spirit for a space. Serve—until he grows restless again, when the wanderlust calls him again. Until every fiber of his being yearns for the sway of the leaning palm-trees on the beaches of blazing delight, for the tenuous blue waters of the shark-infested bays, for the sundrenched places that he loathes—and yet loves. Mr. Hobbs is still manager at Cangrejo Point, growing fabulously rich on cocoa. A certain departed operator, whose name is mentioned with awe and affection throughout Roncador, can have a supervisor's billet at Cangrejo Point whenever he cares to breeze in. Any old time, Mr. Hobbs says so himself, and his word is his bond.

The Bully of the Behemoth

by

Arthur M. Harris

Author of "Who Fires First," "Groan o' the Gallows," etc.

"HOW about the *Steel Queen?*" This despairingly.

"Nope. Full."

"An' the *Western Wave?* Ain't she—" The question was pitched on a note of desperation.

The shipping agent withdrew a languid eye from the far distance and dropped it on little Moriarity's frightened face.

"Ain't I told you there's no chanct only on the *Behemoth?* That or nothing. What's the matter with the *Behemoth*, ain't she a good ship?"

But the agent grinned as he spoke. Moriarity laughed drily.

"A good ship! She's—you know what she is, everybody does. An' 'Red' McGonigle's still firin' on her. A good ship! She's a ——" and Moriarity's profane adjectives were all spent then and there. Flattened by his emotional explosion, Moriarity crept dejectedly from the agency.

That was just his luck, reflected Moriarity, wandering uncertainly along the docks; just his luck to be in urgent need of a job and to have nothing available in the way of employment but the awful engineroom of the *Behemoth*. He had oiled on many ships that had plied the seven seas' ports but, blessedly, he had always succeeded in dodging the *Behemoth*.

In most of his ships he had met refugees from the engineroom of that dreaded vessel and the off-watch tales they told had made the flesh of his small and ineffective body creep; tales of brutal manhandling, of unbelievable bullying, of a sense of playfulness that would have done no disgrace to the most ferocious of old-time Red Indians.

Undoubtedly the engineroom crew of the *Behemoth* were man-eating tigers, nothing more nor less; all of them worthy of their leader, the unspeakable Red McGonigle. They were regulars who sailed steadily on that one ship, a close group as united as the fingers on one hand, to which no newcomer was admitted save through a veritable ordeal by fire. The least considered one of that gang would have been accounted terrible on any ordinary ship.

Certainly, that engineroom was no place for a Moriarity. An experienced and capable oiler, he was still one of those unfortunate types which seem predestined to draw the tormenting, bullying propensities of any group of men with whom they contact. Something obviously timid and retiring about them, they expose a weakness far too tempting for their more rugged fellows to resist. So they are inevitably picked on.

Only relatively comfortable on any ship, Moriarity, when his latest berth had brought him to Seattle, had determined to forsake the sea. A job here and there about town; willing enough but somehow

ineffective, then a bundle of cheap blankets and a free ticket to a lumber camp up in the woods. The last chance to get a grip on shore life and that soon found to be hopeless.

The robust artists of the double-bitted ax, the deft manipulators of gigantic logs, and the rollicking, reckless "high-climbers" were no temperate wind to the shorn lamb, no whit more merciful to a little man with peculiarities than were their counterparts of the seas. Especially to a little man who snored—a high, bugling, almost weirdly wonderful snore. Two nights at most guaranteed his departure from any camp on the third day.

So he crept back to Seattle, smelled the tidewater and accepted his fate. And now, seeking employment in his old line as oiler, of all the ghastly circumstances, the only opening was on the impossible *Behemoth!* Might as well jump off the dock at once as to walk into that tigerish lair.

Or die of starvation, say. One dollar and twenty-two cents were all that he had in the world, and no prospect of more.

Mournfully mooning along, he found himself under the shadow of a great steel bow, thrust almost to the street rail. Mechanically his eye lifted up and up the line of figures that indicated the vessel's draft, up and up until his idle glance became suddenly electric.

BEHEMOTH

That name, up there on the bow, was almost a physical shock to Moriarity. Of course he knew she must be in port or she would not be calling for an oiler here, but to come right smack up against the actual ship; that was a reality that prompted an instinctive retreat. For some great, horrible hand might reach down and grab him if he did not flee.

But he did not run. Perhaps the so-called fascination of horror was upon him; instead of flight, he paused, then oddly drawn onward he passed through the dock gates, shrinking against the side of the warehouse from which strings of stevedores were trucking the *Behemoth's* cargo.

SUDDENLY he darted into the dark shadows of a warehouse door, for there, not six feet away, a great hulk of a man was lumbering down one of the gangplanks; a man in dungarees, of tremendous shoulders, arms as long as a gorilla's, and with a head of glowing red hair—a man unmistakably from the engine-room; unmistakably Red McGonigle!

And the face of Red McGonigle, Moriarity could see, bore physical witness to the legends of his fights. The forces of law and order had left their imperishable imprint there, mingled with the more genial souvenirs of the battery of his lawless fellows.

Moriarity gazed and hated; hated the brutal bulk that was keeping him from a job he needed hungrily. Moriarity had never seen him before and he had never known Moriarity and yet here he was, playing an obstructing part at a very real crisis of Moriarity's humble, but essential affairs.

And as he gazed and hated, Moriarity wished for the kind interference of a miracle. Would that Red McGonigle might be run over by an automobile, or, more likely, would that he would get in a fight with the cops and be detained in jail until after his ship sailed; then his gang would probably fall apart and a decent man might venture to take a job among them.

Perhaps some one of these happy accidents would happen to the big bum. Moriarity, foolishly hopeful, decided to follow his unwitting adversary. If only something would happen to him!

Nothing happened. Red McGonigle cleaved his way through the city crowds with the irresistible directness of a battleship until he stopped in front of a moving picture theatre, whose spread of advertising boards somehow caught his eye. Slowly he swayed back and forth in solemn contemplation, then, persuaded, bought his admission and disappeared through the swinging doors. Moriarity followed.

He sat where he could study Red McGonigle's face, all shadowy and ferocious in the dimmed lights. It fascinated Moriarity at first more than did the flickering story on the screen, but presently, as he began to pick up the thread of events, he became more absorbed in the picture until everything else, even Red McGonigle, was forgotten.

For it told a tale which deeply appealed at that moment to little Moriarity. A great, big bruiser, so the gist of the pictured theme went, after terrorising the neighborhood, meets with a runt of a fellow, weighing scarcely more than a hundred pounds. The bruiser thinks to eat the runt alive and

pretty soon they are mixing it in a wonderful fight, from which, to the surprize of everybody, the runt comes out triumphant. Then it turns out that the runt is a professional prizefighter in disguise; the idea being, so Moriarity thought, that science can lick mere brute strength any day of the week. Apparently the shadow story was a very real and impressive thing to the huge McGonigle. Moriarity looked at him once in a while and noted his absorption—the mouth partly open, the eyes fixed and staring, the head thrust a little forward, with now and again a perturbed scratching of that square, close-trimmed red head.

Dreamily, Moriarity found himself wishing that he was a prizefighter; then he would show the big terror a trick or two. But maybe Red would not be so smarty if he thought Moriarity was a prizefighter; maybe, in that case, Moriarity would not get a chance to show what he could do. And out of the dream emerged a thought—shudderingly dismissed, but only to return again persuasively.

The idea shaped itself rapidly—perilous but plausible. If he could go aboard the *Behemoth* in the rôle of a prizefighter, why wouldn't that gang of roughnecks be scared out of some of their deviltry? If he could run the bluff only so far as San Francisco, first port of call of the *Behemoth*, he could get another ship out of there.

As the piano tinkled thinly under the languid touch of a youth with sleek hair and a sallow face, Moriarity's decision crystallized. He gripped the arm of his seat, let go with sudden irresolution, grew warm again with the thought, then, as the picture closed, he took his hat and headed smartly off for the shipping agency. But he took time before leaving to notice that Red McGonigle was settling himself for a second viewing of the story.

Yes, the job was still open, said the agent, swishing his palm along the counter and deftly imprisoning a fly, and Moriarity signed up as the new oiler on the *Behemoth*.

From the agency he went to his lodging house and there obtained a half-sheet of notepaper and a rumpled envelop. And this is what he wrote thereon, with his left arm circled about the paper and his right hand laboring with a stub pencil.

Deer friend red:
Be warned a man calling himself Moriarity is goan to ship on the *Beemoth* in engine room he is not a reel oiler but a perfeshnal pug who wants to get away from the polis. Im given you tip so you gies doan haize him and get your beens busted.
Yours truly. A Old Pal.

The envelope he addressed to "Mr. Red McGonigle, cair *Beemoth*, pier 3, Seattle, Wash."

That done, he bought himself an enheartening dinner. Having eaten, he went back to the theater, where he stayed until the show closed at eleven o'clock. Red McGonigle, presumably sufficiently entertained, had departed. Moriarity absorbedly studied the attitudes of the little professional pugilist as he began to get into action, for was he not now himself a professional, and if so he must certainly acquire the more approved gestures of the practise.

As soon as the show opened again next morning he was there, watching the wonderful work of the tricky little man as he knocked the big bruiser cold, and when, in the late afternoon, he left to get his dunnage from the lodging house, he had a fairly correct idea of elementary pugilistic attitudes.

THE sun was setting behind the dark blue run of the Olympics across the Sound when Moriarity, kit bag on shoulder, trudged across Railroad Avenue to Pier 3. From behind a string of standing box cars he made a preliminary reconnaissance of the *Behemoth*. Outlined, leaning against the ship's rail, were four or five men.

"The reception committee," thought Moriarity, with a chill of nerves, "waitin' to see the pug come aboard."

If he had had but one dollar in his pocket he would probably have turned and run, but over there in that great black bulk he knew was his only lawful lodging for the night.

Moriarity swallowed a lot of air.

"You got to be an actor now, boy, or be kilt deader'n a door nail."

He pushed open the little gate cut into the large dock gates, stepped in and walked, whistling, along the pier. He marked the quick straightening up of the men on the ship—Red McGonigle had got that letter, all right.

He came to the gangway ladder. At its head, on the ship, loomed in the twilight a figure of sinister menace; the horrific Red. Moriarity sensed that this was the critical moment of a first impression.

"Be an actor or be killed," hummed through his head warningly.

"Be an actor and be killed anyway," suggested Fear.

"Die gloriously," admonished Despair.

Despair won. Standing at the foot of the ladder, he hefted his kit bag a moment and then swiftly tossed it up to the grim creature on the deck.

"Catch!" Moriarity was amazed that his voice actually did work.

The men along the rail gasped; hardened as they were, it did seem too fine an evening for sudden murder. But they gasped once more as a big hand shot out and obediently caught the flying bag.

Moriarity followed his kit briskly. Red McGonigle, his mouth open and his piggy eyes seemingly glazed, handed over the bag without a word; without, that is, snapping the upstart in two and tossing the pieces overboard.

"Thanks,'Fatty.'" Moriarity nodded and went toward the engineers' bunkroom.

"Fatty!" Not an ounce of fat on Red; simply bulk—that great torso of his was just iron against which he was always cheerfully willing for either friend or foe to bruise a foolish fist.

"Fatty!" And nothing happened! Red only rubbed a hand perplexedly up and down his thigh and stared at the retreating figure of the newcomer.

"Wonder what name he fights under," he growled. "Here, you, gimme a cigaret."

He jerked the other new man, an innocent youngster by the name of Sills who had never heard of the fearful reputation of the ship on which he had signed, toward him, plucked a package of cigarets from the lad's shirt pocket, extracted one, shook the rest over the deck and went to smoking furiously.

In the engineers' quarters Moriarity was sitting alone on his kit bag, shaking with nerves. Here was the very lair of the dread *Behemoth* bunch; the home of the hardest-boiled crowd journeying Pacific waters. How far were they—was Red—bluffed? It looked a little like a fair start, but—ah, he felt very poorly.

In the morning he awoke before the rest of the sleepers. It took him an instant or two to realize where he was. With realization came the bubbles of perspiration to his forehead.

The gang stirred and began to turn out. Moriarity sat on the edge of his bunk attempting to pull on his shoe as coolly as if he had been in that ship for years. He was aware of the daylight scrutiny of his mates.

"Good morning, gents," he said airily, carrying the attack, "I trust no gent was disturbed by my snoring."

He gazed around as if he just wished some gent would say he had been disturbed.

"Not at all, not at all, Mister."

"Mister!" That was the stuff.

"I thought I'd ask. A gent did complain to me—once!"

He squared his thin shoulders and strutted out, and the bad, bold men of the *Behemoth* looked at each other and in awestruck unison exclaimed—

"*Once!*"

That forenoon Red McGonigle knotted a handkerchief about his immense neck, compelled his unwilling shoulders into a coat, and rolled up to Second Avenue. In a sporting goods store he purchased a paper covered manual on the rudiments of boxing. A crisis had come in the life of Red McGonigle when he would buy a book.

In the way of physical comfort the *Behemoth* was a good enough ship; shower baths, tiled floors and very decent food. She had competent navigators and engineer officers tolerant enough if a man could do the work.

And Moriarity was adequate to his job. As the ship slid over the easy waters of the Sound, out into the Straits of Juan de Fuca and turned Flattery and the Tatoosh Light into the long, slow upheaving of the Pacific, he dropped into his place with the smoothness of habit. Red McGonigle, always watching him with a profound curiosity, was prompted to inquisitiveness.

"You been an oiler sometime, eh?" he asked.

Moriarity realised that the remark in his anonymous letter that the "pug" was not a real oiler was an error of imagination, but he could cover that.

"Some," he replied, with a provoking reserve. "I done other things though—along athaletic lines."

"Ah!"

Red wanted very much to know about "athaletic" engagements, but he was the last person on earth to assault the proper reticence of a gentleman secluding himself from the police. He knew, however, that they meant only one thing—pugilistics, but he craved details. Always he was trying

to fit Moriarity's face into the gallery of fistic heroes he had so long and so carefully pondered in the pages of the *Police Gazette*. He might try another tack, an indirect approach.

" 'Red's' me moniker," he volunteered, "you got any?"

Moriarity paused impressively, then glanced around with a gesture of proper caution.

" 'K. O.' I'm called, some places. Guess it's all right around this ship. Yes, I'm 'K. O.' "

"Knock Out!" thought Red, impressed. "Lightweight class."

He looked at the oiler's narrow shoulders and skinny arms. Must have had a load of science to put himself across, he calculated. Red allowed himself a sigh. If only he had had science he might be the heavyweight champion of the world. He suffered the common human affliction of large ambition and limited talent.

Not a finger had been lifted against Moriarity thus far. It seemed as if the engineroom crew recognized that he was a job for their leader, so they held back waiting for Red to do the proper thing. Meanwhile they beguiled the hours with practising their traditional torture on poor Sills. They tormented, bullied and drove him until Moriarity shuddered to think of all the misery that might have been visited upon himself. And what if they should call his bluff sometime? Well, he would just have to jump overboard, that was all.

Now and then he would allow himself to be caught, as it were, entirely by surprize in the attitude of a ring expert—fists up, a half crouch, head swaying artfully from side to side. Then he would catch them eyeing him and drop his arms and straighten up and look annoyed, and they all understood that on account of his unhappiness with the police he must conceal his glorious talents. Effective, for the present.

He had read somewhere that prize-fighters trained with a skipping rope, so he made one and would get out in a secluded corner on deck and skip energetically.

"What's the matter with that oiler," inquired the puzzled chief engineer. "Nut?"

"A pug they tell me," his second explained. "Keeping in trim, I suppose. Seems to have our bully boys scared white."

"Not Red, though, surely."

"Yes, Chief, looks like somebody's got old Red's goat at last."

"We ought to fix up a go between them. Might be kind of funny."

"I was thinking that myself, Chief."

THE skipping rope made a great impression on the bully boys. It was professional, sure enough. They hoped to use it as a lever to pry open the secrets of his fascinating past, but all they got was the evasion that Moriarity was just exercising. And so they would cluster together and watch those poor skinny arms going up and down, the knobby knees rising and falling, and imagine they saw power and science and speed in it all.

Young Sills was pathetically envious.

"Gee, I wisht I was you," he yearned, "a regular pug. The bunch couldn't run me then, eh? Say, K. O., give us lessons in boxing sometime, will yeh?"

"Oh, sometime, mebbe," answered Moriarity, amply patronizing.

Young Sills chuckled with a delighted inward amusement.

"Something funny?" inquired Moriarity, always watchful.

"I should say, K. O., I'm a-laughin' to think what that Red stiff's got a coming to him when you and him mix it."

"When him and me mixes?" gasped Moriarity.

"Ain't you heard? Second engineer's around fixin' a go with you and Red before we strikes 'Frisco. I reckon Red's scared, but they'll make him go through with it. He'd be an awful tough nut in an alley mix but he ain't no science. It makes me feel good, I can tell yeh. I wouldn't miss that fight for no money in the world."

The Oregon coast was a long way off, thought Moriarity with a sinking dread. Undoubtedly the kid had heard something; something all too awfully true.

He felt decidedly queer. Was there any lucky chance to get smallpox or something? Oh, that a disaster at sea would happen; an engulfing storm, a smashing waterspout! What about scuttling a ship? Could he do that, secretly and quickly? Anything at all that would instantly obliterate them.

To be rended by that enraged baboon while a flock of monkeys looked on and gloated!

Could he train young Sills and shove him forward some way, pretending that as he,

Moriarity, was a professional he could not ethically battle with an amateur?

Silly young Sills. What good was he, anyway? Why wasn't he a prizefighter and able to lick Red? He felt a weak, foolish rage against poor Sills.

This was the end. This came of shipping on the *Behemoth* in spite of all inward warnings. His story would be told up and down the coast—told with grins and nods.

And now they would be frank about discussing his prizefighting past. And he had no science and he had no strength and Red McGonigle had no science but—he didn't need any, the huge fathead. Just had to drop his little finger on the average fellow and put him in hospital.

Next morning he was still alive, but just alive. He was languid in rising and the rest of the gang preceded him to work. Passing Red McGonigle's tumbled lair, a paper covered book, sticking out from under the pillow, caught his glance. "Boxing. A Handbook of the Manly Art of Self-Defense." With a quick jerk he thrust it into his pocket.

Outside, he ran into the second engineer—officious ass! How would Moriarity like a little go with Red McGonigle? It was no secret that the oiler was a prizefighter in disguise, and here was a wonderful chance for everybody to see that tough old egg of a Red get cracked. The second murmured something about making up a purse. Moriarity's lips were too dry to permit smooth utterance; he nodded swaggeringly. As if a little thing like fighting an unscientific bullock could bother him!

He was going to lose his life; any one who bet on him would lose his money; they would all lose together. Lose-lose-lose . . . lost; yes, all was lost. He ardently wished he could lose himself, that his too, too solid being could evaporate and waft like a gentle cloud over the side of this hateful craft.

All day long Red McGonigle boomed about the ship, clamoring for his book on boxing. He accused half a dozen people of having it, was involved in three ready-made fights, and had to be restrained from hurling young Sills over the side. Somebody was framing him—he was sure of that—they were putting it up on him. He'd clean 'em all, including the pug, that he would.

At evening, crouched by himself under one of the mazy ladders in the engine room, the pug was gorging himself on the manual of boxing; now, if ever, an art of self-defense. So absorbed was Moriarity in trying to get what he could out of the little book that he heard not a stealthy foot upon the ladder, knew not that a hairy monster was bending over him until he felt hot breathing upon his curved neck.

He looked up into the man-eating visage of Red McGonigle.

So he was going to die sooner than he thought. Well, let it come, a few hours could make little difference. He could try what kicking would do—perhaps if he planted a shoe in the right spot smartly enough itmight help. But he was afraid not.

"So you had me book, eh?" Red's voice was thunderous with impacting doom.

Moriarity did not speak; he could not. Red pondered and decided that the pug was a cool one.

"What d'ye think of it—as a fighter?" Red inquired, with a queer humility.

Moriarity could not believe his hearing. So he was not to be torn to pieces at once. He laughed foolishly, hysterically, but, Red thought, derisively.

"Is it as rotten as that?"

Moriarity laughed louder, his nervous control gone, the reaction had been too much for him. Red McGonigle swore that when he got to Seattle again he would go uptown and lick the guy in that store for selling him a bum book, a book on fighting that made a real pug go silly a-laughing at it. He looked sheepish. Moriarity, keen with self-protection, marked the expression.

"Did you figure to lick me with a book like that, Red?"

Red settled down chummily on the ladder stairs.

"I don't figure to lick you at all, K. O.," he said, lowering his voice and very confidentially. "Listen, here's me play. You know O'Phelan's Athaletic Club, in San Francisco? Well, Satiddy night he's puttin' on amatoors. Fifty dollars is a prize for heavyweights, with a chanct to get into the perfeshnal business to a likely feller. I always figgered if I had science I could lick anybody in that town.

"Listen, a guy tipped me off you was coming aboard and that you was a real pug. Here's me chanct, thinks I, to get in a week's trainin'. I goes up-town and get a book to help along like, then I figgered to get you

to give me some pointers, and Satiddy night I'll try for the prize and if I wins, you an me'll go fifty-fifty."

Saved! For a moment, at any rate. But what would the bunch say, if they didn't get their fight? Red McGonigle growled eloquently. They wouldn't say anything before him—anyway he and Moriarity would put on an "exhibition" bout for 'em, sometime before they docked.

"Hark'ee, pug," said Red hoarsely, before they separated, "fifty-fifty if I win at O'Phelan's. If I lose—this, science or no science, up an alley."

He curved a mammoth fist in ugly promise beneath little Moriarity's shrinking nose.

THE ship's disappointment upon being deprived of the pleasure of seeing a conflict between Red McGonigle and the professional prizefighter was mitigated by the expectancy of witnessing Red's entry in amateur fighting at O'Phelan's Athletic Club, in San Francisco. This was Wednesday when they heard the change of program and they would be in port Saturday afternoon, so it was not long to wait.

Secretly some of his henchmen suspected their leader of being in dread of the little oiler's "science." Some one recollected hearing McGonigle speak of a motion picture he had seen in Seattle, wherein a small professional walloped a husky amateur, and remarked that when speaking of the picture Red had concluded with the observation that he reckoned there was "more truth than po'try" in the thing.

Maybe they could stage an exhibition bout before the ship got in, so as to give them a chance to appraise Red's fighting form.

Wednesday noon Red beckoned Moriarity to one side. With a grin he produced two pairs of boxing gloves, which had been cunningly manufactured by the steward out of flour sacking, stuffing them with clean "waste" from the engine room supplies.

"We'll work out with these, K. O. Not so bad, eh?"

Moriarity thought quickly.

"Huh, Red, you're too quick. You ain't in shape to put gloves on yet, nix, not, no. You gotta have the preliminaries. I'm a-goin' to put you on the skipping rope today and something else tomorrow."

"Ain't we goin' to box?"

"Sure are. O' course, but I don't want to bang ye up, Red, so's you'l be all stove up and can't go to O'Phelan's."

Off shift that afternoon, Red McGonigle impressed the crew with his skipping rope work.

"That's to make him quick on his feet and develop his wind," explained Moriarity impressively. The crowd looked sidewise at the oiler with wondering awe.

Big Schultz, the deckhand, said he wished he could see them work out with the gloves.

"He ain't ready for the fine work yet," snapped Moriarity the trainer. He would have been glad of a chance to push Big Schultz overboard.

On Thursday McGonigle was urgent for the gloves, but Moriarity, anticipating him, had one of those inspirations which sometimes come in the quiet dawn. Whatever happened, he felt that he must never get the gloves on with that enormous bear. Thursday must be given over to shadow-boxing. That was the inspiration.

The notion impressed Red tremendously. It seemed so professional. He was off duty that afternoon and the whole of that leisure time was occupied on the sunny side of the deckhouse ducking, dodging and striking at his shadow, while Moriarity, who knew no more about shadow-boxing than did his pupil, stood by and urged speed of hand and foot.

Big Schultz looked on and again wished he could see K. O. and Red with the gloves on, wished it audibly and embarrassingly for at least the gladiator's trainer.

"Now tomorrow," remarked Moriarity, with quite a ringside air, "Red's going to have to put the gloves on, for a good workout. He'll need a good sizeable sparring partner."

Here Moriarity looked meaningly at Big Schultz, who involuntarily made as if he would dodge behind the man beside him. Red, all blown and panting, was leaning heavily against the deckhouse, deeply convinced that this thing of "conditioning" as his little coach called it, was a sizeable job.

"Ain't you goin' to put 'em on with me?" growled Red, with a puzzled glare at Moriarity. "I want to get some science."

Moriarity waved a pooh-poohing hand.

"Red, you can't afford to box with a small feller. You're going up against the heavyweights on Satiddy, and you gotta learn the range of a big man. You gotta have your

eye trained, and you can't do that if you box with a lightweight. You gotta have a sparring partner that'll be as close a imitation of the real thing you're goin' to meet as possible. Like Big Schultz there."

"I wouldn't mind," said Schultz, stolidly, "but I've had the rheumatiz in me shoulder fer a week. You better get somebuddy else."

"Oh, you needn't figure to be poking Red about much," replied Moriarity, persuasively, "for all you gotta do is stand up and let him punch around at you a bit. He ain't going to exert hisself, Red ain't, for he's gotta keep hisself for the big go."

Schultz looked as if the program outlined for him made him somewhat sick, but the threat in Red's glinting eye if he refused made him feel still more sick.

Red and Schultz mixed it, as the boys called it, on the canvas-covered forehatch. Moriarity was referee and time-keeper rolled into one.

The two big fellows surged against one another like a couple of tussling bullocks on the prairie, their arms stiff-crooked before them and their feet shoving about as ponderously as elephants', while Moriarity, strenuously remembering all the scraps of prizefighting talk he could, danced about them with hoarse exhortation. Then Red's huge arm, swinging wildly, happened to meet Schultz's round, iron head with a jar that brought the crimson anger slowly swelling across the sparring partner's face. Blindly, angrily he struck out and landed a damaging blow in Red's left eye, so hard that the flour-sack glove split and the waste oozed out.

"Time!" shrilled Moriarity, artfully clipping a full minute off the round.

Red stumbled to his stool, only half seeing. Moriarity rained an incomprehensible jargon of ring slang in his ear, but the grim Red only muttered between his teeth—

"Pug, if I'm licked Satiddy night, youse is going to be kilt."

In the second round Big Schultz was more sprightly and seemed somewhat to have overcome his ancient fear of Red McGonigle. He slipped right into the engagement as soon as Moriarity gave the word to go, slipped his left, or unbroken, glove squarely upon Red's nose, causing it to bleed, whereupon Red, much enraged, hurled himself upon his adversary and together they rolled on the canvas in a most unscientific clutch.

"Hey, quit," shouted Moriarity. "You're licked, Schultz, and that'll be enough workout for the day."

They reluctantly disentangled themsleves. Schultz got up, pulling off his gloves.

"Is that all you have to do to be a prizefighter?" he drawled, as if a new and brilliant illumination had burst upon him.

"Gee," growled Red, "I'd have stayed with that bird and cleaned him fer half a nickel."

"That wouldn't 'a' been scientific," declared Moriarity, judicially.

He turned to meet a cynical, mocking, curiously calculating expression on the second engineer's face.

SHIFTS and docking the ship kept Red and the crew busy, so that Moriarity did avoid meeting the terror of the *Behemoth* on the mat; a thought which would have been comfortable enough if there were not the prospect of the contest at O'Phelan's, with Red's threat of fearful reward to his trainer should he be defeated.

And in San Francisco Red and the gang kept so close together that Moriarity looked in vain for a chance to covertly slip away; with something of the sense of being under arrest, he was brought to O'Phelan's Athletic Club. Under compulsion, as it were, he found himself upon a stool in Red's corner—a small and unhopeful figure in the swirl of tobacco smoke and the glare of the great lamps.

This was amateur night at O'Phelan's. O'Phelan had a dressing room or two for professionals, but amateurs had to perch around the hall in a huddle behind the ring while awaiting their calls. Moriarity looked idly at the preliminary weights—the feather and lightweights, but his intent regard was for the clump of heavy men who were seated some distance off from him and Red McGonigle. Horribly big they looked to Moriarity, hunched up there, some quite professionally clad in bathrobes, others, not so sporty, wearing overcoats over their bare bodies, and a few, like Red, dressed in trousers and coats. Beneath his outer garments Red had on a bright blue bathing suit, cut off at the waist, rapidly improvised for the occasion. A block of faces in the

spectators' seats represented the entire crew of the *Behemoth*, from the captain down.

"Wonder who's me meat," whispered Red, glancing at the row of heavyweights.

Although he spoke big, Moriarity noticed that he wet his lips nervously, and that his words came in jerks.

"Me too," said Moriarity, absently.

He was planning his retreat in the event of Red's downfall. He could sprint down the aisle over there by the wall, then jump those few empty chairs, double back a bit to avoid that row of lockers, and down the stairs.

Just as absently he watched the passage of the lightweight events; found himself, in fact, more preoccupied with the bright colored sleeve garters that a busy referee affected.

They were coming to the heavyweight card. Already the gloves, blood smeared, were tossed over to him. As he tied them on Red's enormous wrists he felt a nervous tremor in the bully's arms.

"Gee," he exclaimed hoarsely, "I wisht they weren't so many people here."

"Keep your nerve," replied Moriarity, affecting a cool sneer.

"Me? I could clean the whole shebang if it warn't for science."

A voice was calling—

"Red McGonigle against the 'Frisco Battler."

Red climbed into the ring—how the rope shook in his grasp! Moriarity looked eagerly but none of the heavies who had been sitting in view of him and Red arose; instead a head popped up suddenly from the other side of the ring and something big, with flashing red fighting togs, swung through the ropes. He did not glance over at Red, but turned his back and engaged himself in tightening a shoe lace and readjusting his gloves.

He stood with Red to receive the referee's cautions; perhaps he too was nervous, at any rate he vied with Red in gazing bashfully at the floor of the ring.

The gong clanged imperatively; the backers leaped from the ring, pulling the stools of the fighters with them. A club habitué had volunteered to help in Red's corner, an efficient person who, to Moriarity's relief, monopolized the job, leaving to the latter only the honorable office of bearing the water bottle.

Red stood out in the ring with his arms up, holding them as rigid as small steel beams. The Battler feinted clumsily a second or two; they swung around so that Red's face was toward Moriarity—and over Red's face was passing a queer and startled look.

Suddenly the Battler, with unexpected speed, crashed down upon Red's fixed arms; then planted a torpedoing right against McGonigle's chin. Moriarity saw Red's eyes roll around like pinwheels and gasped as the great bulk wabbled heavily to the canvas.

"Schultz!"

It was a roar from the men of the *Behemoth*, led by the excited second engineer. In frantic flight, Moriarity was nevertheless compelled to pause and gaze back.

The referee was holding aloft the victorious glove of Big Schultz!

"Golly," groaned Moriarity. "Golly!"

He was standing out in the safe, dark alley; with one hand still clutching the water bottle with which he should have been right then aiding and assisting his fallen principal.

"I must have developed the wrong champ."

There was a sudden noise overhead, like the beginning of a riot.

"The big stiff's woke up," ejaculated the little oiler. He smashed the bottle in the gutter and fled.

The Bush Lopers

CONCLUSION

by

Hugh Pendexter

Author of "The Homesteaders," "Iroquois! Iroquois!," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

"CARCAJOU"—the Wolverene—was fleeing from Quebec, where he had gone to confess hissins. He was a "bush loper," an illicit trader with the Indians and English; and in this year of 1687 the Government of New France was attempting to maintain a monopoly by inflicting stern punishment on all those who infringed it. Therefore he knew that Governor Denonville was likely to continue the pursuit of him even to Mackinac, to La Baye des Puantes (Green Bay) or to the Narrows (Detroit).

In his flight he learned that one Captain Rooseboom, a representative of "Corlaer," as the Indians called any governor of New York, was heading an expedition to take the Indian's trade away from the French. So also was another New York trader named McGregorie. Immediately Carcajou's nimble mind began devising a scheme whereby he might act as messenger and thereby gain favor with Durantaye, or Du Lhut, or Perrot, French commandants of the Upper Lakes posts, thereby possibly escaping punishment for his free trading.

At Cayuga Creek on the Little Niagara he captured a runaway Dutchman from New York Province named Dirk Brouwer, for whom Governor Dongan had issued a warrant on the charge of smuggling.

"You live, m'sieur," said the bush loper, "on two conditions: That you employ me as your *engagé*, and that you travel to Mackinac and La Baye."

AT a portage they met the murderer Turcot, the fugitive dandy Chartier, fresh from France; Black Kettle, a Seneca friend of Carcajou; and Dead Bear, a Seneca whom Chartier had rescued from service as a galley slave, and who could not rejoin his Iroquois tribe because he had suffered the disgrace of being whipped.

The strange party paddled its way along the north shore of Lake Erie. At last they made the Narrows, ahead of all pursuit. There they were joined by Papa La Blanche, an old man who had so many wives among the various tribes that he could not remember them all. He was accompanied by Adario—the Rat—chief of the Tionantati. The party held a carouse, then went into a drunken slumber. In the middle of the night Carcajou felt a hand at his throat. He seized his assailant, and by the light of the fire which others renewed he stared in amazement at the stupid face and rolling eyes of Papa La Blanche. Limply clutched in the old man's hand was a long knife—his own.

BUT Carcajou did not suspect Papa of trying to kill him, for Papa had been helpless as a log from drink, whereas his assailant had been able to break away from his grip. That morning one of the Rat's men was found murdered with a new French ax. Carcajou denied that any of his party did it, but drew up an order on De Lhut at the Narrows to send presents in requital. Then the party left the Tionantati to resume their journey. On the way, much to Chartier's puzzlement, friction developed between Carcajou and Brouwer.

"Brouwer wants to say something, but is too wise. The Wolverene feels that Brouwer is thinking bad thoughts about him, and his heart is hot," observed Dear Bear.

At last they reached Point St. Ignace, where the French had a palisaded fort commanded by Captain Morel de la Durantaye. Walking toward the fort, Carcajou met three former acquaintances in the form of the giant half-breed Dubeau, "the Picard" and John Black—a name assumed—a renegade from the English colonies, wanted for murder.

"*The Bush Lopers*," *copyright, 1925, by Hugh Pendexter.*

While he and Dubeau were engaged in a friendly, but terrible fight Brouwer went on and told the commandant about Rooseboom's and McGregorie's trading expeditions on the way from New York.

WHEN Carcajou entered Durantaye's presence he found the commandant conferring with Chevalier de Tonty on the best way to arouse the Ottawas to go against the Iroquois according to Governor Denonville's orders, thereby stirring up trouble for the English. Hoping for immunity to punishment as a bush loper, Carcajou told the two captains that their Ottawas, together with the Hurons, were planning to ask for peace and friendship with the Iroquois and English, and that if Rooseboom and McGregorie ever reached Fort Mackinac with the English presents the Indians were sure to rise and massacre all the French on the Upper Lakes and the Illinois.

"They must be captured before they get here," he added, "and be made to look like very small men in the Indians' eyes."

Just then a messenger from the Narrows entered bearing the note which Carcajou had sent to Du Lhut asking him to send presents to the Rat, who, the note added, was about ready to jump to the English. The commandant flew into a rage and ordered Carcajou in irons. However, he escaped, and with old Papa La Blanche set about paddling like mad westward to find his friend Nicolas Perrot, former governor of the Upper Lake country, who he knew would understand everything and afford him protection.

At the Oconto River they encountered a party of twelve Fox tribe hunters. The whites were forced to kill one of them to make their escape, and two others, messengers sent from the home village, to prevent the hunting party from knowing that the Foxes had taken the warpath against the French.

Then he hurried on after Perrot, whom he found making camp on the Fox River. Perrot placated the Foxes and promised Carcajou a pardon from New France when they returned to Niagara. The Foxes, won over to the French side, promised to return with the party to Mackinac and Niagara as allies against the English.

After the departure of the Foxes a Potowatomi runner came up with a "medicine-talk"—letter—for Perrot. Carcajou saw Perrot's face grow stern and gloomy as he read. Carcajou hid himself.

"This is serious," muttered Perrot. "That fellow Carcajou will get himself killed yet."

The bush loper whispered to La Blanche:

"Find out what is in that paper. I can hear ghosts laughing at me. Be quick!"

WHEN Carcajou returned from his hiding place La Blanche reluctantly told him that Durantaye's message commanded that the bush loper be brought a prisoner to Mackinac. It had been discovered that the three dead Indians met their deaths from French axes and Carcajou was suspected. The Wolverene decided to go to Mackinac immediately to clear himself of the charge, and help prevent the Hurons and their allies from joining forces with the Iroquois.

Arriving at Point St. Ignace, Carcajou learned that Durantaye had already started for Detroit to fight the Iroquois. He was also told that the Hurons now favored the English and the Ottawas were neutral.

Suddenly an Ottawa canoe arrived with the news that the English had just been defeated. Shortly after this the French leaders landed with their English prisoners. Durantaye then confined Rooseboom and his men in the stockade, and secured the twenty confiscated canoes, loaded with supplies, near the shore.

From the Indians Carcajou learned that, in their eyes, he was innocent of the three murders with which he was charged. That night the Wolverene stole several of the captured canoes and hid the supplies in the brush, half a mile downstream.

Later, two dead Ottawas were brought into camp; they, too, had been killed by French axes. Had it not been for the intervention of the Rat the bush loper would again have been charged with murder; as it was Durantaye retained his suspicions.

Carcajou then departed for the Indian villages to sell the stolen supplies before the theft was discovered. When Perrot arrived the bush loper told him of the victory, and gave him a thousand beaver out of his profit from the goods he had sold, saying that it was Perrot's share as Captain of the West.

PERROT urged the Indians under him to prepare for battle with the Iroquois, and told Carcajou that he would follow him to Detroit in twenty-four hours. When Carcajou reached Detroit he was delayed in his search for the French commander by a fight with Dubeau which that *coureur de bois* forced on him. After defeating his opponent the bush loper explained to Durantaye that he had traded some stolen goods, which he had found, to raise funds for the French.

Without waiting for Perrot, who was expected to arrive in a few days, the French forces moved on to Niagara. On their way they met a messenger who informed them that twenty more English canoes had been captured. At this news they returned to the Post to receive the prisoners. Here Carcajou again stole two canoes laden with supplies.

When two *coureurs de bois* were found dead from poisoned rum the bush loper told the Hurons that the English were taking this means of killing them all; this rekindled their hatred of the enemy.

At last Perrot arrived. Again the French started for Niagara. Carcajou, being determined to discover the murderer of the Ottawas, kept awake during the night while the rest of the camp slumbered. Suddenly La Blanche heard a faint noise and pointed silently to the black forest on their right.

CARCAJOU, listening, heard an enemy near at hand. Then came two thuds as if some one struck at the logs he and La Blanche had wrapped in their blankets. Carcajou leaped upon the savage but was thrown to the ground, the Indian escaping.

"When I seized him I felt the whip marks on his back," said Carcajou, and he shouted to the sleeping camp: "Catch Dead Bear, the Seneca! He killed a Tionontati man at the Narrows! He killed the Ottawas and poisoned our soldiers! Kill him!"

But pursuit of Dead Bear was futile; he had melted into the forest.

Again the army moved forward, increased by many Ottawas and Hurons, who demanded that they be led against the English. On July eleventh Fontaine was shot as a deserter, although many of the officers had defended him against the charge.

Perrot then ordered Carcajou to go ahead of the army on a scouting expedition, taking two other men with him. Brouwer begged Carcajou to take

him along with him on this dangerous venture. The bush loper, although distrusting the man, granted his request and selected La Blanche as his other companion.

After they had separated in the forest Carcajou retraced his steps and heard Brouwer conspiring with one of the enemy against the French. Hurling his ax at the traitor, but missing, he sped back to camp where all the *coureurs de bois* swore that Brouwer must die for his treachery.

Shortly after this a body of young Seneca warriors attacked the French but were repulsed with much slaughter. After this short battle John Black, a renegade Englishman, came into camp, saying that he had been left behind by the English and had nearly starved to death in the woods.

Then it was discovered that an Iroquois peace belt had been brought into camp; an invitation for the Indian forces of the French to join forces with the Long House. As the offer was not accepted it remained for some one to return the belt to its senders as a sign of rejection. Perrot instructed the bush loper to learn which one of the enemy had been the bearer of the belt.

Carcajou, concealing himself behind a tree, saw John Black creep over to where the belt hung, take it from the tree, and start back in the direction of the Seneca camp; Carcajou followed him silently. After trailing Black for some distance Carcajou sprang at the belt-bearer and, after a desperate struggle, succeeded in killing him with his own knife.

THE bush loper decided to take back the belt to the Senecas himself, for he knew that, by Indian custom, no harm could come to him who carried the peace-offering.

This daring project Carcajou put into action, and would have been released immediately by He Has Claws had not a cry of ill omen suddenly interrupted the palaver. Then a messenger arrived with the news of Black's killing. Brouwer and Dead Bear, who were in the Seneca camp, now urged that Carcajou be killed for having attacked a bearer of the belt. But He Has Claws decided that Carcajou should be allowed to proceed unharmed until he reached the spot where he had knifed the Englishman; after that he would be at the mercy of the infuriated savages.

Seeing Dead Bear poised in readiness for the race to the deadline, Carcajou boasted—

"You are children to think a dead bear can catch a live wolverene."

He Has Claws then turned to Carcajou.

"Go!" said the chief.

CHAPTER X

IN THE DAY'S WORK

CARCAJOU walked slowly toward the woods. None of the Senecas moved a step in pursuit so long as he was in sight. But the moment he entered the timber he commenced running softly and cautiously down the path.

His disappearance in the growth was the signal for a wild chorus of yells. Led by Dead Bear, traveling like the wind, the band took up the chase. Carcajou never feared that the orders of He Has Claws would be disobeyed. The Senecas would not harm their victim until he reached the spot where Black had died; but they would keep him close company and be upon him like wolves the instant he covered that span of safety.

When their cries suddenly ceased Carcajou knew they had completed the short distance from the fires to the woods. Their silence was his cue to slip noiselessly from the path to his left. Instead of proceeding toward the opening he doubled back, endeavoring to keep within a short distance of the path. He called upon all his woodcraft so as to travel silently.

He was within six feet of the path when he heard them coming. He knew the first man was Dead Bear, and his hand itched for a weapon to fling at the man's head. Doubtless it was fortunate he was unarmed; also fortunate for the former galley slave. In single file, and running with confidence begotten by long familiarity with the path, the Seneca men padded by. When, as he believed, the last of these had passed his position he regained the narrow rut with exquisite caution and ran after them. Even a Seneca could not distinguish the sound of his moccasins from theirs.

Although unable to see the rearmost man of the file ahead, he soon discovered that he was drawing dangerously close. Dead Bear was beginning to throw out men on both sides of the path to guard against the maneuver the quarry already had made. While this fringe of hunters was strung through the woods the swiftest runner would be hurrying to the opening.

Carcajou lessened his pace. He must leave the path again. He had hoped his hunters would make direct for the opening and not scatter until they reached it. If he could cross this danger zone he was optimistic, or vain, enough to believe he could outwit them in the woods beyond.

The man ahead was walking very slowly. Carcajou prepared to leave the path, but now there came a new danger; one that held him in his tracks. Soft footfalls were sounding behind him. This would be some Seneca man late in joining the chase. He was running as fast as the opaque darkness

would permit so as to be in at the capture.

Carcajou knew his presence was known to this man when the steps sounded slower. While the forest was clean and open it would be impossible for him to travel it, if he left the path with this man at his heels, without quickly being surrounded. Then he would gently be forced to walk to the edge of the woods, where his status as a bearer of belts would cease and he would become a victim for Seneca torture.

So he scuffed his moccasins and waited. The tardy pursuer came up unsuspiciously and in a low voice asked—

"Why do we stop?"

Carcajou's first shot out toward the voice and smashed against bone. The man's feet left the ground, and he fell with a crash, insensible, and with a broken jaw. Carcajou slipped from the path to his right, taking time to select the spot where each foot should rest, and hurrying none even when the man down the path called out:

"What is that noise? Who is there?"

Receiving no response, he glided back to investigate, while Carcajou worked deeper into the growth. The man in the path began crying out that the white man had struck down a Seneca and must be hiding close by in the woods. Carcajou shifted his course and worked as rapidly as was consistent with stealth parallel to the path and toward the opening. He could hear Dead Bear screaming with rage beneath the oak where Black had died, and calling for the Senecas to surround the Frenchman and drive him across the deadline.

Then the clamor and shouting were silenced by the chief sternly reminding them:

"He is a bearer of belts until he reaches the opening. No man is to touch him till he reaches the opening. Keep close beside him. Let men stop the path through the opening and fill the woods on each side."

The night was well advanced. Carcajou knew he must make the most of the black blanket which was both his defense and hindrance. As he measured the time to the coming of the first light he realized that only a bold course could save him.

"If I had something in these bare hands!" he inwardly lamented. "You might as well wish for wings like a bird. You're in a trap, Wolverene. Let's see you work out of it."

Dead Bear repeated the orders of the chief and shouted the names of those men who were to comb the woods on both sides of the path and then cross the opening to the second growth. With absolute confidence in himself he announced that he alone would guard the entrance of the path at the opening.

There was no further practise of stealth on the part of the Senecas. They could be heard hurrying through the woods on both sides of the path and exchanging low signals.

Now compelled to avoid these men on his side of the path, Carcajou began planning a new defense. To follow his foes across the opening was impossible. To endeavor to pass around the opening under cover of the woods would require more time than fate alloted him, in addition to the certainty of his hunters being ahead of him. To attempt a passage of the opening except by the beaten path would mean almost immediate discovery; for even a weasel would betray himself in passing through the thickets and briers and over the mounds of decayed, fallen timbers.

"Upon my faith, brave man, greatest of all *coureurs de bois*, there is but one way out of the trap!" murmured Carcajou in self-encouragement." Two years' beaver for sixty minutes more of blackness than the east will permit. Come, come, Wolverene! You're as silly as Old Papa. Only one way out. What are you waiting for?"

"And shifting his course, he began making for the spot where he would cease to be a belt bearer, and where Dead Bear was waiting for him.

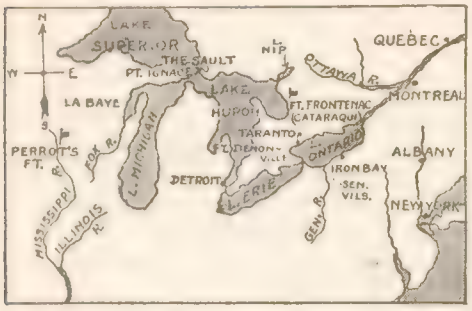
By this time Black Kettle was in command of the men on the Canadian's side of the path and He Has Claws was directing the hunt on the other side. As Carcajou finally came to the narrow trail Dead Bear, a short distance below, began fearing the quarry was already beyond the opening. And he shouted:

"Let two or three men come down to this place. The man who was whipped will cross the opening."

Two Seneca men up the path started for the oak, and Carcajou glided ahead of them. The Seneca men called out their names so those in the timber would not leave their work to heed Dead Bear's request.

Carcajou advanced more rapidly. Vowing

candles to every mission on the Upper Lakes, Carcajou drew nearer to where he knew Dead Bear stood waiting to be relieved. He had felt the grip of the escaped galley slave, and he did not relish another



encounter, even if they could fight alone. He had been helpless in the man's hands and realized that if a survivor escaped from the heavy galley oars he would carry with him the strength of several men.

In front of him, within a dozen feet, Dead Bear called out—

"Three men come, and only two give their names."

Carcajou left the ground, struck the Seneca with knees and fists and bowled him over and was worming his way through the leafy tunnel at the entrance to the opening before the two Senecas behind realized what had happened. He was erect and running, bent almost double, before Dead Bear regained his voice and warned:

"After him! Through the opening!"

He spoke in gasps, and although the two men understood him and instantly started the pursuit they did not think to repeat Dead Bear's words. Soon Dead Bear commenced shouting to the Senecas to guard the opposite side of the opening. Then he endeavored to take the lead in the chase; but the violence of the collision had shaken him, and it was another minute before he could take up the pursuit.

The two in the opening screamed their hunting calls. From both borders of the opening, sometimes abreast of the Frenchman and sometimes in advance of him, sounded the war whoop. Each time this terrible cry rang out and exploded in shrill intensity Carcajou's legs would convulsively pick up speed.

He was running for his life and moderated his pace only sufficiently to guard against unexpected turns in the trail. He would have whooped back in defiance had not his brief encounter with Dead Bear jolted some of the air from his lungs. The men behind him, familiar with the twisting path, cut down his lead, but the black wall of the timber was close. The next few seconds would decide if he had beaten the Seneca men to this point. They were in advance of him on both sides, as was evidenced by their occasional yells, but they would lose time in converging on the path.

As he came to where the path left the opening and entered the forest Carcajou bowed his head low and lifted his brawny arms to ward off a blow from the darkness; and he muttered—

"Carcajou, you're going through!"

His muscular body seemed to ricochet from side to side as his feet felt the welcome forest mold inside the timberline. He felt as if he were exhaling steam as he caromed from side to side of the path, lifting his feet high to escape the deadly clutch of a root and keeping his arms out stretched to warn him against collision with trees. Once, actuated by instinct, for he did not see the menace, he swerved just in time to escape being knocked senseless; and the rough bark scraped the skin from a shoulder and left it warm and sticky with blood.

He visualized his pursuers quite accurately as two lines rushing to an apex somewhere in the path ahead. He heard men on his left enter the path behind him; and he muttered:

"*Mon Dieu!* I'm through!"

For the first time he became conscious of the silence which had replaced the shouting and exchange of signals. He began to understand that the situation had taken a new turn. Every step toward the army increased the Senecas' chances of running into a night scout. The thought gave him fresh strength. And whereas the Senecas had howled and yelled and their quarry had kept silent, now the Wolverene began shouting.

His stentorian voice, considerably below the pitch of a Seneca voice, began a booming call for assistance. He called out in French and cunningly shouted answers in the various dialects of the far tribes. The sound of a runner closing up on him caused him to question his ability to hold the lead. An ax chopped into a tree at one side of him and he promptly discovered that he had not employed all his reserve strength.

And then came a welcome ululating cry which he recognized as emanating from one of Tonty's Illinois scouts. It spurred him to greater efforts and more daring in defying the trees than had even the ax.

Tears of joy or nervous reaction came to his eyes when a Frenchman ahead yelled—

"Where are you, Big Ox?"

"In the path!"

Two guns discharged, a few seconds apart. The fighting cry of the *coureurs de bois* crackled and roared on both sides of the trail. More guns were blindly fired in the hope of checking the pursuit. At last Carcajou knew he had won, for a man at the side of the path yelped—

"Keep running, big ox!"

Crashing to one side, Carcajou gasped:

"The rifle, Old Foolish! I heard it bark!"

"It's just loaded," grumbled Papa La Blanche. "But mine isn't. Fall back, stupid."

Carcajou fired up the path and heard the foremost runners plunge to one side.

From across the path the Picard called out:

"All the children are out looking for you. How many are upon us?"

"About fifty. But they're widely scattered," replied Carcajou between gasps; for his heart was still racing and his lungs could not find enough air.

La Blanche repeated the information and began to retreat. As Carcajou followed him the old man tossed over his shoulder:

"You'll catch it, little one. Papa Perrot was so anxious about his child he wanted to turn the whole army loose to find him. His Excellency sent out some of the woods runners. If we brought you in dead he would forgive. But to cause all this fuss and still be alive is very bad."

"Shut up, Old Simple. It will be light soon. Then we'll give them a fight," growled Carcajou.

"We heard you bleating for help like a lost lamb."

"Calling to warn you of your danger," angrily replied Carcajou. "Asking help? Your head is sick. A Wolverene asks help of no one."

"Make that talk to the woods runners when you get back to the fires," chuckled La Blanche. "Your friends believed Black had killed you."

"I'll break the head of the man who dares say such nonsense!" hotly warned Carcajou. "I've been having some fun. You'll laugh when you hear about it."

"Where did you hide your plunder this time?" maliciously asked La Blanche.

A volley ripped through the woods across the path. It was repeated on Carcajou's side of the path. The *coureurs de bois* were saying farewell to the Senecas until the next meeting. And the Senecas, silently and swiftly withdrawing, made no reply

CARCAJOU, with jaw thrust forward, walked jauntily as he entered the camp and found many of the men awake and the Indians about to take to the woods. Chevalier de Tonty and Perrot quickly found him, and the latter demanded:

"Where have you been all night? What about that traitor?"

"I have been fighting for my life all night. The traitor is dead," was the dramatic reply.

"Go on. Explain."

"M'sieur did not say what should be done with the belt after I had killed Black," said Carcajou. "When a belt is rejected it should be returned. What good to refuse a belt if the sender does not know it has been refused? So I carried the belt to a camp of fifty Seneca men, less than a league up the Totiakton path."

"You delivered the belt?" incredulously asked Tonty.

"M'sieur is surprized? I have said so."

"I am surprized you are here alive if you took a rejected belt to the Senecas," said Tonty.

"So am I surprized. But the belt was formally delivered to He Has Claws, of the Bear clan. I struck two men with my naked fist in getting away. Had my fist been made of copper it would be covered with blood."

"Look here; this is a talk his Excellency must hear!" cried Perrot.

And for nearly an hour Carcajou entertained a circle of officers with a stirring recital of his adventures. If there were certain embellishments and numerous exaggerations yet the truth was plain to all; the wild Canadian had ventured alone into the hostile camp and had returned the belt.

After the bush loper was permitted to withdraw and snatch a bit of sleep Denonville told Durantaye—

"The man is a very brave madman, or

else the greatest liar I have ever heard talk."

"He has told the truth. He has impudence enough to visit the devil," said Durantaye.

"And pinch his long tail," added Tonty. "The man should be pardoned, your Excellency. He has been guilty, I believe, of certain minor indiscretions, but his service to New France is of much value. He did well in returning the belt. The Senecas will not send another, and our Western Indians must stand up to the fighting.

"If he leaves the woods alive and is guilty of no more faults I will see he is pardoned," agreed the governor.

"If he could have a permit to trade one year with one canoe and not more than eight men, it would keep him on the lakes, where he is always picking up bits of news," said Perrot.

"I have decided to issue no more trading permits. If I make an exception in his case I'll say as much after I return to Quebec."

Chartier had been up all night, walking nervously about. He had not known when the woods runners stole from camp with a few of Tonty's Illinois scouts; an ignorance that perhaps saved his scalp, as he had learned nothing of woodcraft since first seeing the Niagara.

Carcajou slept poorly, feeding on the excitement in his brain and often mumbling threats and defiances. When he opened his eyes Chartier had a kettle of meat and fresh water waiting, and had even procured a small quantity of brandy from the officers' mess. The young Frenchman for once laid aside his air of superiority and with much meekness requested:

"Please, monsieur, tell again what you said in defiance to the savages when they were about to burn you at a stake."

But some of the *coureurs de bois* were making for the fire, as if scenting the brandy, and the Wolverene placed a guard over his tongue. He told the young man:

"I am weary of the subject, M'sieur de Niagara. A pound or two more of the meat while I finish this brandy ahead of the company coming."

He bolted the last of the liquor as the first of his rough companions came up, and to Dubeau, who was in the lead, he cried:

"*Bon jour*, Big Bear. Had I known you were awake I would have saved some of the excellent brandy for you. A gift from monsieur the governor, with his compliments."

Dubeau grimaced and grunted:

"A big talk. You stole the brandy. You say you killed that Black. Where's his scalp?"

"He made a brave fight. I had my hands full, old iron ribs."

And for once the bush loper spoke simply and truthfully and gave Black full credit for making a courageous ending. In concluding the Wolverene confessed:

"Until last night I would not have touched his scalp, believing it to be on the head of a coward. And after we had fought I could not touch it because he was so brave. He stayed to fight me when he could have run away. He nearly got me; something you never did, old stonehead. He was a traitor to both the English and the French; but he died like a man. See that you die as gallantly, bear-man."

"I could crack him with one hand," growled Dubeau. "Don't call it fighting when I play with you."

When daylight came—July 16th—*coureurs de bois* and red scouts ranged the woods and brought in furs, blankets and other property dropped by the Senecas in their flight to Totiakton and beyond. In the afternoon, finding no enemy to fight, the army was marched to other cornfields, and the work of destruction was renewed by the soldiers. To keep the Indians busy Denonville sent the French Iroquois and some woods runners to reconnoiter Totiakton.

To the surprize of this mixed force this large palisaded village was found to be deserted. It occupied a strong position on the edge of a hill and near the river after after which it was named.* This town was about thirty English miles from the lake. In abandoning it the Senecas must have been in great haste; for although they had set it on fire only three or four of the long houses had burned.

Carcajou was among the first to enter the town. The French Iroquois at once commenced hunting for plunder and found much that appealed to them. The woods runners fired the town and remained until assured that all the houses would be destroyed. They started back to the army,

*Totiakton: "It is a bend of the stream." Near Honeoye Falls on the Honeoye outlet.

bearing heavy burdens of trade goods, dressed robes, fur and clothing; but much of this booty was abandoned when a scout from the rear came up and reported that the enemy were pursuing. None of the enemy seen by the main body, however, and the *coureurs de bois* told the scout he had seen his own shadow.

Nor were any of the Senecas seen that day or night. On the seventeenth the army's only accomplishment was to fill the forest roof with smoke from burning corn. A considerable quantity of corn and other crops was destroyed at the small village of Gannongaree, which the Jesuits had renamed St. Michael.

Perrot reported to Denonville that the Mackinac and La Baye Indians were very uneasy. Tonty said the same about those from the Illinois country. The white men, too, were uneasy. Many of the soldiers were sick. All the officers were admitting to each other that the work of punishing the Senecas was not advancing. This talk was overheard by some of the troops; and regulars and militia became very pessimistic. The soldiers complained that all would die of disease if they stayed in the woods much longer.

On the eighteenth more fields, hidden deep in the forest, were found and destroyed. The Indians continued in their refusal to do this work, and as there were no Senecas for them to fight they openly said the war was over and they must go back to their villages.

On the nineteenth the army camped before the ruins of Totiakton. Although there was but very little cleared ground close to the village, several fields were found and ruined. Three Illinois women, escaped slaves, came into camp and among other things said the Senecas were threatening to break the heads of all their prisoners to prevent their reaching the army.

The *coureurs de bois* welcomed the break in the monotony caused by the daring approach of a Seneca scout, who fired a bullet into the camp. This man was pursued but not sighted. The escaped slaves insisted that the Senecas were much frightened and were fleeing to the Onondagas and the English. They represented that forty Seneca fighting men were killed in the battle of the thirteenth.

That day and the following were used in spoiling growing crops and in burning the old corn. The soldiers were sick of this work and sick of the country. From sheer homesickness some were incapacitated for any work.

On the twentieth the weary program was continued at the village of Gannondata. It was on the gate of this town that they found the arms of England, placed there by Governor Dongan in 1684.

It was while at this village that the interest of the red allies was revived by the return of a Lorette Huron from a scout. He had been as far as the edge of the Cayuga country and brought back two Seneca scalps, those of a man and a woman. He was given a dram of brandy and made much of. Immediately other French Iroquois and some from the Western tribes were fired with ambition to duplicate the Huron's achievement, and small bands of them began disappearing in the forest. But very few of these scouted any distance from the army.

Perrot's worry about his red charges hourly increased, and he vainly expressed the desire that the enemy might appear and fight. The expedition, in the secret estimation of all the officers, was stagnating. During a heavy rain the camp was shifted back to Totiakton.

The storm continued throughout the day and added much to the misery of the sick and wounded. Illness among the soldiers and the militia rapidly increased. And although large fields of crops, old corn and many hogs were destroyed, every day food was failing the army.

The Indians made no effort to conceal their desire to quit the country. The Captains of the West feared a general desertion. Then came the first break; a large band of Ottawas and Hurons and some of the French Indians left the army before their withdrawal was discovered.

Denonville then announced that preparations were to be completed for quitting the country and that the departure would be immediate. There was general rejoicing, and the sick showed improvement. Yet on that very day four Iroquois from Montreal set off for the Cayuga lakes to find Seneca scalps. Having arrived at a decision, Denonville was eager to return to the lake.

Those wise in forest warfare welcomed the order, as they believed a return was imperative if the army were to be saved.

Sickness and short rations threatened to accomplish what the Keepers of the Western Door could not effect.

CARCAJOU and his friends tried to keep a fire going under a kettle of pork with the rain greatly hindering them. The woods runners were in a sullen frame of mind and grumbled much about the lack of fighting. Among themselves they blamed the commander for bringing them so far without leading them into action. Carcajou, scowling at the hissing coals, suddenly told the circle:

"We will go with M. de Callières and Chevalier de Vaudreuil deep into the forest tomorrow. They will take a large number of the soldiers to spoil more fields. Spoil all the corn? Might as well try to pick up all the acorns in the woods."

"I will not go and help spoil fields," angrily said the Picard. "Did I come down here from Point St. Ignace to cut and burn? —— take me if I did."

"We thought you were a chief," slowly added Dubeau. "Now you talk like a squaw."

"Patience, my children," soothed Carcajou, feeding some dry bark to the spluttering coals. "We will go to keep from turning to rust. We may find some fighting."

"Now you talk in the voice of a chief," grunted Dubeau. "If we don't find some Senecas you and I will have a friendly fight, my trap robber."

"If I go I'll keep traveling until I reach the lake. In Montreal today the women are wearing their short petticoats which reach hardly half of the leg," croaked Papa La Blanche. "I wonder if the white cabbage are suffering from worms. I would trade all the corn in this abominable country for a dish of red beets and some horseradish."

"Shut up!" growled Carcajou. "You make my heart ache."

Chartier begged permission to accompany the woods runners. He would have been refused on the ground of his helplessness in the woods, but Carcajou said he could help with the troop. Perrot came up and made their going positive by announcing that practically the whole army would move and after one more day of crop-destroying would push through without halt to the lake.

"Then tomorrow is the last chance that old Seneca woman will have to use the dry bark she has been saving to burn you, m'sieur," said Carcajou.

"I'll gladly risk capture if they'll only make a stand and give us a fight," glumly replied Perrot, his mind casting back to other futile attempts to crush the Iroquois.

At seven o'clock in the morning M. de Callières started with the greater part of the army. Before proceeding a mile Carcajou, scouting ahead and trying to teach Chartier some rudiments of woodcraft, was alarmed by the sudden appearance of nine naked Indians in front of him. They were armed with bows and arrows, and for a moment the woods runner believed he was in for a fight. Chartier bristled and drew his rapier. Then Carcajou took a second look, swept his companion behind him and cried:

"They are friends, M'sieur de Niagara! They are Illinois. They have come to help us fight when there is not enough fighting to go around. And they are as friendly as they are naked. And they're naked as worms. *Ma foi!* To make such a long traverse just to see some corn burning or rotting!"

He spoke to them in their own tongue and was told they had come to help Onontio kill the Iroquois. When he told them of the nearness of the army they ran to find it, eager to look on Tonty, whom they acknowledged alone as leader.

Shortly after this incident some Hurons dragged a Seneca to the line of march and boasted of having caught a spy. The man by neither word nor look appeared to realize that any foes were about him. M. de Callières ordered the Hurons to bring their man along so he might be questioned after camp was made. But the Seneca refused to walk. He remained mute and would not take a step.

"Then go and talk to the other ghosts we've made!" cried the irate Huron leader. And he chopped the man in the head, killing him instantly.

"*Mon Dieu!* What horrible beasts!" groaned Chartier.

"But the rascal wouldn't walk," explained Carcajou. "Who wants to carry him in this heat? And they couldn't turn him loose."

The army halted by some fields and by noon had finished their work of laying

waste the same. Four Seneca villages* had been destroyed by the owners or the invaders. Denonville told his officers that he reckoned that three hundred and fifty thousand *minots*† of green and old corn had been spoiled. With the exception of the one brief fight scarcely a regular or militiaman had seen a Seneca during the twelve days of marching, searching and burning.

The rest of the army came up, and it was decided to march two leagues and make the last camp in the forest. When it was definitely known that the army would travel direct to the bay on the morrow the sick and wounded were much cheered and the red allies ceased their plans for a quiet withdrawal. Soldiers were heard laughing, and the militia gossiped about their farms and crops and families. The *coureurs de bois* were not so exultant, as many of them had no homes. Yet if there was to be no fighting they were glad to leave the gloomy woods and return to the great lakes.

The officers were frank in their talk among themselves. Perrot told Tonty:

"Not so bad as La Barre's expedition, but something of a failure nevertheless. We were to crush the Senecas. They depended on help from the Cayuga and Onondaga nations and did not receive it. I don't know if they, or we, are lucky that they received no re-enforcements."

"Four villages and a large amount of corn captured and destroyed," gloomily summed up the chevalier. "His gracious Majesty pays high for small booty."

"Well, we've marched where we would through their country," defended Durantaye. "If they run and hide we can't spend our lives digging them out of the woods."

"They will strike back," warned Perrot. "This invasion convinces them they are safe from us in their own forests. If their young men hadn't brought us a fight their losses would have been nothing. I tell you, messieurs, that Montreal will hear them howling along the river before snow comes."

"Our savages wouldn't have stayed another day," grumbled Du Lhut. "You can never count on getting more than one fight out of them; and they won't wait for that."

"They began stealing away two days ago," agreed Perrot. "The fact remains that after making many threats we've marched an army into the woods and burned some bark houses and corn, but we haven't smashed the Western Door of the Long House. Now Sieur Dongan will cover them with presents, and the St. Lawrence towns will hear them whooping before winter."

Some of this talk was overheard by Chartier, who repeated it to Carcajou and lamented the army's failure to win great honor.

"It will be sorry news for his gracious Majesty," he sighed.

"Hear a child talk!" scoffed Carcajou. "When you read his Excellency's report you'll think we whipped every one of the Five Nations and drove them into the ocean. Now all you fight-hungry children listen to a chief."

The *coureurs de bois* gathered around him expectantly, hoping he had some bold plan or had stolen some brandy. Casting a glance about to guard against an officer overhearing his talk, he said:

"A Huron from St. Ignace came in at sundown and told me he had been followed by a small band of Senecas. The Senecas suspect we are withdrawing. At sunrise they will know it for a fact. They will try to win a few scalps. As the army marches north they will dog us. I think we should walk apart from the army tomorrow and see what we can find."

His news and suggestion were warmly cheered. Dubeau warned:

"If you start ahead of me I'll break your back the minute I find you at the landing place. My hands ache all the time."

"If there's promise of a fight we must not miss it," cried the Picard. Then dolefully, "But I dreamed of a bear last night."

"Eh? Then you keep with the army," cried Papa La Blanche. "It's a bad dream. There's blood on it."

"Then it'll be blood on the bear," said the Picard.

Even Turcot, the outcast, tearing his yellow teeth into a huge piece of pork, welcomed the prospect of fighting, and snarled:

"Let us have some real work. I've seen no blood except when I've killed a hog."

Carcajou grinned amiably and said:

"The woods are free to those who can keep on their feet. I shall start an hour before sunrise, scouting east of the line of march."

*These villages were near the sites of modern Victor, West Mendon, East Bloomfield and Honeoye Falls.

†Or 1,200,00 bushels. This is the incredible amount given by Denonville in his memoir of the campaign.

"You'll have company near even if you do not see it, said Dubeau grimly.

That night the sentinels heard faint cries in the woods that were taken to be spies gathering to follow the army to the bay. But none came close to the camp. At the time he had set Carcajou stole from the camp, trailing his rifle. He traveled due east and was pleased to glimpse other figures moving in the same direction and keeping abreast of him. But once he reached timber less open than that along the path of the army he heard and saw nothing of his friends. As he was trying to decide whether to keep on to the east or shift his course to the north he was much annoyed to hear a voice calling in French:

"A minute, please, monsieur. We have all day to walk in. I keep losing you."

He spun about and frowned heavily on beholding Chartier, awkwardly endeavoring to overtake him. The young man was quite breathless as he came up, and the last of the lace at his sleeves had been torn away. Carcajou fiercely greeted him by asking:

"Do you think you're celebrating the King's Fête? Why didn't you blow a trumpet, or sing?"

"But his Majesty's most gracious birthday is September fifth. I have no trumpet. And I do not feel like singing," replied Chartier.

Carcajou groaned faintly and asked:

"Why did you follow me? How did you know I would be out early this morning?"

"I heard your talk last night. I knew the army on the march would be a dull place."

"Now look here," softly warned Carcajou. "This isn't Paris or Quebec. We may have a fight before we rejoin the army."

"Good! It will make me forget the heat. And the smell of burning corn! *Diable!* Shall I ever get that smell out of my nose? When I return to France I will challenge to mortal combat any man who asks me about the crops the Indians grow."

"I think you are very brave, or else a fool," mused Carcajou. "But neither your bravery nor your foolishness shall cost me the top of my head. I'll lead you back close to the army."

"No man leads me," defied Chartier. "You don't own these woods. I will not return to the army."

Carcajou wrinkled his nose, then rubbed it thoughtfully and stared for a few moments at the thin, flushed face and angry eyes.

"Very well," he surrendered. "You shall follow me. Don't speak unless I speak. Do you understand that?"

"I have two ears," Chartier haughtily reminded him.

CARCAJOU resumed his advance to the east. The young Frenchman kept within five or ten paces behind him according to the nature of the forest floor. The bush loper had reached the edge of tangled growth, where saplings and bushes had grown up to hide the ravages made by fire. He was worried for the young man's safety and decided not to enter the scrub.

He shifted his course to the north and began to work back where the woods were more open. He could not make Chartier go back, and if he were to be left alone it would be easy for a skulking Seneca to surprize and kill him. He decided he must cut short his walk. He frowned each time he heard an awkward step behind him; and as Chartier had learned nothing of woodcraft since arriving in New France the bush loper's frown persisted.

He was loath to abandon his enterprise and was inspired to find Papa La Blanche and turn the young man over to his care with secret instructions to lead him back to the troops. Chartier would have no idea where he was until he cut the line of march. This idea caused Carcajou to chuckle. He shifted his course nearly southwest as he was positive all his friends were reconnoitering below him.

He grinned slightly as he heard a muffled exclamation. He assumed Chartier was reviling a root or a fallen branch as a slight scuffling sound followed. It was the slither of steel that brought him spinning about. To his amazement he beheld Chartier with his back to a tree, his rapier in play to stand off two Senecas who were trying to close in with their knives. Neither of the savages apparently had suspected Carcajou's presence.

He darted his gaze about to discover other foes but saw none. Then he sharply called out:

"Keep your back to the tree! Steady!" And he ran to the rescue.

Chartier, feinting and thrusting, and smiling for the first time since entering the Western Door, pricked a savage's wrist and snapped:

"Keep away! There are others close by! I believe we're surrounded."

Carcajou shifted his gun to his left hand and with his right pulled the ax from the back of his belt and hurled it at one of the crouching Senecas. The man seemed to have eyes in the back of his head, for he jumped as the ax flew through the air. He was not quick enough to escape entirely, and the blade struck his thigh a glancing blow. The man reeled, snatched up the ax and hurled it back, barely missing Carcajou's head.

The bush loper raised his rifle, and the second man dived to cover. The wounded man, bleeding freely, already had treed himself. Yanking Chartier to his side of the tree, Carcajou furiously demanded—

"Why didn't you give the alarm?"

"You took on the authority of an officer. I was not to speak until you spoke. I obeyed orders," coldly replied Chartier. "Besides, there were but two of them."

"I can't read your signs," surrendered Carcajou. "The best I can make of it is that you're a brave fool. Why do you think other Senecas are near?"

"I saw them at some distance among the trees as I was fighting. They were coming this way."

"May the foul fiend take them! And many thanks for condescending to inform me. Those two fought very silently with you. No shouting to their friends. I have it! They know there are more of my breed close by. If they fire guns or howl they'll bring them up here. But I'll soon fetch them."

And he thrust his gun around the tree and tried to discover something for a target, if only the tip of a finger, so he would not feel he was wasting his lead.

"They'll come one at a time and run into a trap!" warned Chartier.

"Eh? So they might. You have a head at times. One by one they'd be picked off like ripe plums. Still if I can make a kill I shall shoot. They should have brains enough to be careful."

"We seem to be in no danger. I advise a brisk charge on those two skulkers," said Chartier.

"I will tie you with my belt if you make a move until I give the word," growled Carcajou. To himself he said:

"A young madman. He has the head of a loon. But it's strange we don't get an ax or an arrow."

"I believe the two men are waiting for their friends to come up," suggested Chartier.

"Good. I like enough to make it fun. You have a head again," admitted the bush loper.

He had scarcely spoken when an unseen man within twenty feet of the tree called out in the Seneca dialect:

"Take them both alive. All gifts ten men can carry if both are a taken alive. The young man must not be hurt. Shoot your arrows into the big man's legs. Do not use your guns."

"My gun will bring my friends, M'sieur Coward," cried Carcajou.

"Then shoot," dared the voice. "It is a good gun, and the sound will carry far." This was said in French. "We have men waiting for them to come along. We want to catch you two first. I told you, trap robber, you would never leave these woods alive."

"*Cochon!* I told you I would leave your hair pinned to a tree."

Brouwer ignored this and encouraged the savages:

"Work closer. If he fires the gun he will kill all his friends. I have promised Dead Bear to take the young man alive. He saved the Bear from the whip of the Great Onontio. He must not be harmed. The Bear will give seven strings of wampum for him alive. He will give all the presents ten men can carry for the other man alive, sohe torture him for five days."

An arrow whipped into the tree close to Carcajou's left leg. He wheeled in time to see the savage notching a second arrow and promptly shot him through the head. Then he loudly shouted:

"Every man for himself! Look out for traps!"

And he added a Huron whoop to announce he had made a kill.

Brouwer fairly screamed:

"At them! His gun is empty! Come after me!"

He broke from cover, an ax in one hand, a knife in the other, and advanced on the tree. A Seneca man darted from each side, so that the three approached from as many

different directions; and for good measure the man wounded by Carcajou's ax limped into view, his loin cloth bound tightly around his thigh. He carried his knife and a long pole.

"That long stick is bad medicine. Keep your back to the tree. Don't let them drag you from it!" shouted the bush loper.

Then Brouwer was before him, feinting with the ax. Only his desire to take the bush loper alive restrained him from hurling the ax. He darted forward almost within reach of the glittering knife point; then leaped nimbly back. A bow twanged, and a war arrow grazed Carcajou's leg. This warrior dropped his bow and ran in with his club.

Chartier was crouching low, his left hand curving high over his head and stamping heavily as he fended off the man with the knife and took care not to be tripped up by the long pole. The pole worried him more than did the knives. He made loud noises as he stamped and fenced and taunted his foes with being "pigs" and "dogs."

Carcajou had no time now to watch over his young companion. His two assailants, five feet apart, were slowly closing in. As he saw they were about to spring upon him he threw his knife at the savage, and without time to watch its flight he hurled himself upon Brouwer. The latter's knife ripped a red seam from shoulder to elbow; and then they were on the ground, rolling over in a death grapple.

The savages assailing Chartier and endeavoring to capture him alive, to present to Dead Bear, kept crying for him to surrender and assuring him he would not be hurt. It would have made no difference to the fiery young Frenchman had he understood their promises, except to increase his ire that they could imagine he would desert a friend. He cursed them for cowards and begged them to come close.

It was the one with the wounded hip who gave him the most concern. The long pole could not easily be turned aside, and it was ever searching for his legs to trip him to the ground.

Brouwer still held his knife but had dropped his ax. At the moment they came together Carcajou had grasped the knife hand, and he kept his grip as they fell to the ground, struggling madly. They rolled over several times, and then for a moment came to a stop.

Over Brouwer's shoulder Carcajou glimpsed the man at whom he had hurled his knife. There was a gaping wound in the red throat where the knife had bitten deeply. The man appeared to be bleeding to death. He had torn the weapon free and was holding it as he slowly maneuvered to carry out his bloody purpose.

Brouwer felt him coming, or read the truth in Carcajou's staring eyes. He yelled to the Seneca to slash the Wolverene's hands. But the man was death struck and knew it, and had but one desire. Besides Carcajou's bloody weapon he was still clutching his own. With both hands full, and with the red stream from his throat rapidly covering his naked body to the waist he drew closer, moving stiffly, as if his legs were wooden and lacked joints. Death was trying to glaze his eyes but could not smother his implacable hunger for vengence.

By an effort Carcajou kept on his back. Brouwer repeated his warning to the man to strike the hands. He did not know the man was wounded to death. He cursed him for being slow.

One of the men attacking Chartier started to run and lend Brouwer a hand, but the young Frenchman danced in front of him and almost succeeded in running him through. Now that Chartier was realizing his companion's plight he began backing toward him. The man with the wounded hip could only limp in pursuit of him. Carcajou caught this chance for escape with a side glance and yelled:

"Spear the man with the knife! I have this one!"

Brouwer began struggling to wrench his knife hand free; for he, too, began to fear Chartier would reach him and spear him neatly with the long, thin blade. With his set eyes never leaving Carcajou's face the dying Seneca sank on his knees, and even as the last light was fading from his eyes he used his final strength in thrusting with the knife that had killed him

As the blow started for the brown throat Carcajou whipped Brouwer over to catch it. The unexpected bite of the blade in his back caused the English spy to jump convulsively; and in that second Carcajou secured the advantage. He began turning Brouwer beneath him. The wounded Seneca now ceased paying any attention to Chartier and was limping toward the men on the ground as fast as he could drag

his injured leg. He held his long pole ahead of him. The other Seneca redoubled his efforts to keep Chartier engaged, and the man with the pole came within reaching distance and poked his rude weapon at Carcajou's face. The bush loper ducked, and the sharpened end of the pole raked the top of his head and brought a trickle of blood through the black hair.

With a terrible scream Carcajou became a wolverene in ferocity. He barely sensed the knife thrown at short range by the wounded man and sticking into the muscles of his back.

"I keep my word, m'sieur. Scalp on a tree!" he yelled.

And he killed Brouwer and came up on his knees in time to catch the end of the pole in the chest. He bent back until it seemed his knees would crack, and outflung hand hit against the ax Brouwer had dropped at the beginning of the struggle. For the second time he hurled an ax at the same Seneca, and this time there was no dodging. The cast was perfect and split the man's skull.

Whipping his gaze about, he saw Chartier still gallantly engaged, only now he was on the offensive. The remaining Seneca tried to run away, but Chartier was after him, compelling him to face about, and was taunting him:

"*Canaille!* Stay with me!"

Carcajou crawled to his feet, bleeding from the wounds on his head, back and chest. The Seneca knew he must decide the combat immediately. He could no longer consider Dead Bear's regard for the young Frenchman. He essayed to close in and pretended to slip, going down almost to his knee. Chartier started a thrust, and the Seneca swerved one side and came through the air like a wild cat from an overhanging brow. He shrieked shrilly as for an instant he realized that he must be empaled on the long, thin blade, Chartier jumped back, and his opponent crashed to the ground, breaking the blade where it protruded a foot from his back.

Chartier passed a hand over his forehead as if dazed and stared intently at the man he had slain. Then he heard Carcajou at his side and turned and faintly gasped:

"*Bon Dieu!* Such savagery! So much blood! I feel sick!"

Carcajou reached back, pulled out the knife still sticking in his shoulder and gazed down at his torn chest. He was being slowly covered with a scarlet blanket. But it was not his comrade's wounds alone that made Chartier feel ill. There was the knife stuck in a tree and pinning to the bark a gory trophy.

"Such a land of horror!" whispered Chartier. "I killed cleanly, but the demon had to fall in such a way as to spoil my blade. But that—" and he pointed to the scalp on the tree— "reduces you to a savage, m'sieur."

"Promised him," panted Carcajou. "And pinned to a tree! You have forgotten your scalp, young fighting cock."

And he pointed at the Seneca transfixed by the rapier.

"Not for all this barbarous country would I defile myself," passionately cried Chartier.

"Every man according to his nature," murmured Carcajou. "But I have two brave scalps to take. Two axes on one man! Dubeau will laugh at me."

And he methodically scalped the Senecas he had killed and tucked the hair in the tops of his leggings. He gazed longingly at the third Seneca as Chartier recovered his blade and stared at it ruefully. Then as one who resists temptation he muttered:

"No. The Wolverene wears the scalps of only those he kills. Besides, the young fool would tell that the hair rightfully belonged to him."

BOTH were startled by the sound of several guns fired in a volley. A chorus of cries followed. Chartier started ahead of Carcajou but was seized by the arm and held back. The bush loper exclaimed:

"I heard the Picard's voice! By all the names, they are at it! You keep with me, young hot-blood. Do you think to kill the whole Seneca nation alone?"

And as he talked he ran toward the hidden conflict.

"Ah! Hear that old bone breaker of a Dubeau roar! He's got his paws on something. There! Hear that! Old Papa Simple's Huron howl! If he dies he will leave many widows."

As he picked out the war cries of his friends from the shriller cries of the Senecas his strength seemed to return and his eyes to burn with feral lights again. He had brought Brouwer's ax and knife from the

scene of the conflict, and he kept raising the ax as if eager to throw it. Chartier would have shouted encouragement, but the Wolverene ordered him be silent.

They came to a glade where the *coureurs dè bois* had encountered some Seneca men. The first sight to meet their gaze was the Picard on his side beside the Seneca he had killed. Next their gaze switched to Turcot, who was fighting off two men armed with knives and clubs. Beyond Turcot was Papa La Blanche, clubbing his musket in a frantic attempt to escape being taken alive. The old man was spinning around and for the moment holding back three men. These three warriors were so intent on securing a victim for the torture that they did not heed the plight of a companion whom Dubeau was slowly killing with his hands. Dubeau likewise was oblivious to the general engagement.

Turcot, snarling like some filthy animal, adroitly ducked a blow from a war club, darted under the man's arm and stabbed him to death just as Carcajou and Chartier leaped on to the scene. Both made for the three men attacking old La Blanche, Chartier being in the lead, his broken rapier held before him.

"Go back!" yelled one of the trio in French.

And for the first time the two men recognized him as Dead Bear.

Chartier lunged at his throat with the broken blade. Dead Bear stepped aside and dodged just as Carcajou hurled the ax. The other Senecas, once they glimpsed the terrible spectacle of a giant man clothed with blood, bounded for cover. Dead Bear threw his club at Carcajou and leaped after his companions.

Dubeau staggered to his feet. He was cut and slashed in several places. He glared at Carcajou wildly for a moment; then smiled grimly and cried:

"Some one has clawed our Wolverene! I killed with my hands! I have stopped them aching!"

"With a knife in your belt, big fool!" snarled the bush loper.

"*Que diable!* I have a knife! I forgot it!" exclaimed Dubeau.

Turcot brushed back his long greasy hair and snarled—

"I'd had the other one if you two had kep' clear."

Papa La Blanche, trembling violently as he leaned on his musket and scarcely able to speak, upbraided the bush loper, saying:

"You want fingers in every dish, big ox! You spoiled my fun. I was catching Dead Bear alive."

Turcot warned—

"We must get away."

Dubeau waved his knife and cried—

"Dead men killed by our guns!"

And he darted among the trees, whooped twice and soon returned, bringing as many scalps.

Carcajou exclaimed:

"Heart of an elk! But we've killed more men than Denonville's army has!" Then sadly:

"Poor Picard! He was worth more than all the savages in the Long House. I'm glad he took a man with him. We must bury him cunningly. We'll bury the scalp with him so he can flap it in that Seneca's face if they meet as ghosts."

He kneeled by the Picard and was startled to hear low, mumbled words. He turned him on his back and examined him swiftly and was saddened to learn that the man was dying. With tears streaking through the caked blood on his face he chided:

"No more of this, lazy one! Listen to me. You're only scratched. I'll carry you."

The Picard opened eyes that saw nothing of his surroundings.

"Blood on the forest floor. Blood on the trees."

"On the floor, old friend, of a truth. But the trees— Well, it is so if you say so," soothed Carcajou.

"And there is the sound of drums— English drums. Red. Tramp! Tramp! They are coming. Red coats between the trees. *Dieu!* Such fighting! So many dead men!"

"Here now, old friend. No drums are beating. Leaves won't be red for two or three months yet," corrected Carcajou. "I'll pick you up and carry you like an infant."

"Blood everywhere. From Mitchigami* to the Penobscot. Louis the Great dies, but the fighting does not stop." He continued to mumble like a man talking in his sleep.

"Sacrilege!" muttered Chartier. "His Majesty will live for ages."

"Shut your mouth!" sobbed Carcajou. "The poor lad is dying."

*Lake Superior.

"The roll of drums. Many fires. Many dead people. The poor children and women——"

And he died before he could tell the silent group what else his fading vision beheld.

La Blanche was the first to speak, saying:

"We must hurry away. He dreamed of a bear. I knew something bad would happen to him."

They buried the Picard and the scalp that was his. They patched up Carcajou's wounds and made each other fit for traveling. As they glided through the forest Dubeau grunted in great contentment:

"It was a good fight. Let our little Wolverene plan another path before we leave this country."

"Don't talk to me," mumbled Carcajou. "I have lost a friend."

"The bear dream killed him," insisted La Blanche. "He was a good fighting man and merry over the brandy. They got him because he stopped to flourish his ax before throwing. But you should be satisfied, big ox, with our walk through the woods."

"I am satisfied with two things and sorry for two. With the scalp of Brouwer I left pinned to a tree and the way young fighting cock here handled his long sword. But the poor Picard is dead, and Dead Bear got away!"

"We should have pursued them," declared Chartier, thrusting at an imaginary foe and holding his head high. Then thoughtfully:

"But the galley slave meant kindly by me. It makes me hot with shame to know I was in no danger if I stopped fighting."

"A young wolf has tasted blood," chuckled Dubeau. Then with a sigh of satisfaction—

"That man I sent among the ghosts was stronger than you, my Wolverene."

"Stronger than I!" derided Carcajou. "Simple Wit, the man was sick. He was an old man. I looked at him. He stopped fighting ten years ago. He was a cripple when La Barre shook his fist at the Long House and turned back to the St. Lawrence to find food for his army. Sometime you'll meet an enemy who is young and strong. Then we will speak your name gently as we pass the pipe."

This enraged Dubeau, and they were still quarreling and exchanging promises of a barehanded duel when fifty *coureurs de bois* came through the woods to meet them. These men had heard the gunfire at a distance. On that same day (July 24th) after a march of six leagues the army reached the headlands of the bay.

After Carcajou had washed and rubbed bear's fat on his wounds he was called to the officer's fire and asked to tell again his story; for the whole army was talking about the exploit. Carcajou praised all his companions highly, gave much credit to young Chartier and spoke sorrowfully of the Picard. In concluding he impudently added:

"It did seem to me, messieurs, that we should leave some mark on the enemy before leaving the country."

"I was waiting for some bit of braggadocio like that!" cried Tonty.

Then he struck his metal fist on a log and sighed:

"If I could only have been there! Wolverene, I believe you spoke truthfully when you said it would take many men to carry you to Montreal."

"All of the men at Mackinac, M'sieur of the Hard Hand," corrected Carcajou. "Now I shall receive a full pardon and be given some post to command. Then I'll show you how to manage the savages."

Tonty showed his teeth and remarked—

"I'm glad your experiences have not lessened your esteem for yourself."

"He will talk himself out of all chances of obtaining a pardon, and into an iron cage," gruffly prophesied Perrot.

"If my trouble at home is settled I will tell the Throne of his bravery!" declared Chartier.

Carcajou became thoughtful, and his brows wrinkled. But it was not Tonty's sarcasm, nor Perrot's warning, that held him silent for a minute. Finally he said:

"The Picard had a vision when dying. He saw much blood splashed high on the trees. Of course that is impossible, on the tops of trees. And he heard English drums in the forest. Which was madness, now Sieur Dongan's hands are tied by the last agreement between the royal masters. But his talk made me feel cold. And why does a dying man see and hear things that can not be?"

None made any reply for a few moments; then Tonty murmured:

"English drums rolling in the forest.

Sometimes at night, out on the Illinois, I think I hear them."

Carcajou came near to blurting out that he supposed only dying men could have such mad dreams. He caught himself and stared uneasily at Tonty, undecided whether the chevalier was making fun of him, or was a bit queer in the head. He nudged Papa La Blanche to withdraw. After they had left the circle the Wolverene confided to his aged companion:

"It is some kind of a forest sickness. To think of a man like Chevalier de Tonty repeating the nonsense the poor Picard said!"

La Blanche curiously eyed the blanket Carcajou was carrying in an awkward bundle on his arm and remarked:

"You young stupid! Do you want to be punished for being a common thief? You had no blanket when you went to talk at that fire."

"Eh? As I live, I do have a blanket, Old Nonsense!" exclaimed Carcajou, staring as if surprized at the blanket. "*Ma foi!* It is the heaviest blanket I ever picked up. And how hard! May the Saints protect us! As I live an honest life there's a small keg under it. I will carry it back."

"Thief of thieves!" admiringly exclaimed Papa La Blanche, his old eyes lighting. "Now we will have some songs and some stories. This lake water has made me sick. It is worse than that of Mitchigami."

CHAPTER XI

FOR SERVICES RENDERED

DENONVILLE lost no time in leveling the redoubt at the bay and in tearing down and burning the palisades. The sick and wounded, including Father Enjalrane, were placed on one of the three barks and sent to Fort Frontenac. With them went the governor's messenger with a report of the expedition for the intendant. Then the army was informed that the Niagara, and not the St. Lawrence, was its destination.

Some of the Christian Indians from the St. Lawrence refused to go to the portage and deserted. Several of these were captured by the Iroquois and taken to Governor Dongan, who questioned them as to just what had been accomplished by the French in the Seneca country.

The far tribes and the *coureurs de bois* were glad to sail for the Niagara, but the regulars did not relish the adventure, being afraid of the enclosing forests and fearing the vengeance of the Iroquois. The militia, composed of *habitants* who were worrying about their families and farms, were opposed to visiting the portage. These were quieted by being assured that they would not be detained on the river.

On July twenty-sixth the army sailed for the mouth of the Niagara, the Ottawas and regulars getting away first. Ten leagues were covered that day. The militia lagged far behind. No progress was made on the second day owing to a heavy gale. The militia came up on the twenty-eighth, and heavy winds and rough water held the fleet back.

On the evening of the twenty-ninth the army was forced to camp within three leagues of the river; but as the wind fell they broke camp as the harvest moon came up and worked along the high shore and beached their canoes and batteaux at the mouth of the river at sunrise. Four and a half days had been consumed in making the portage.

Although the army had paddled and rowed the greater part of the night, no time was lost in making camp. The site selected was an elevated spot where La Salle had halted nine years before. Denonville was to carry out his long-cherished project of erecting a post at the mouth of the Niagara, which he named in honor of himself. Fort Denonville was to stand on the point between the lake and the river. The militia understood that the length of their stay on the portage depended on their endeavors, and they were eager to be at work. They were sent out to cut stockade timbers, and the ringing of their axes reechoed between the forest walls.

Sieur de Villeneuve, sent over from Paris for this particular project, had his plans for the defenses completed. The fort was to consist of a square, with bastions at the corners, surrounded by a high stockade, and large enough to accommodate huts for the officers, soldiers and provisions. King Louis, although endorsing the erection of a post at this place had instructed Denonville to build works strong enough only to prevent a surprize attack by the Indians as there would be no foe capable of besieging the post. His Majesty ruled that a loop-holed stockade and a ditch were sufficient;

and he stipulated that the work must be done by the soldiers.

There was no timber to be cleared away on the chosen site. Indian hunters, camping there, had used up the growth for fuel long before Cartier, or any other white man, penetrated the St. Lawrence. Spurred by fear of the Iroquois and an impatience to be back on the St. Lawrence, the regulars and militia soon had cleared away the bush growth. It was necessary to drag the timbers and all firewood some distance. The *coureurs de bois* and Indians scouted the woods and stood guard over the ax men. Signs of prowling Iroquous were discovered but no attacks were made.

While the militia were cutting and sharpening the many sixteen-foot pickets and dragging the same up the hill the regulars dug the ditch in which the stockade was to stand. Although working with a crude pile driver made on the spot, the regulars set seven hundred pickets during the first day. Tools for expediting this work were on the two barks, and these small vessels were windbound two leagues off shore.

Canoes were sent to land the tools; but on the next day, the last of July, the wind permitted two barks to make the mouth of the river, and the defenses grew more rapidly. Three bastions were nearly completed on this day, and the men of the militia were delighted to learn that they were to embark for home within the next few days.

Work was suspended long enough to enact the ceremony of formally taking possession of all the Niagara country in the name of King Louis and France. Identifying himself as "Jacques René de Brissay, Chevalier Seigneur Marquis de Denonville," the governor read the proclamation setting forth La Salle's early occupancy of the river, and the drums sounded and guns were fired.

Carcajou, ever a lover of spectacles and ceremonies, confided to Chartier:

"Now let the English crawl over that! M'sieur the governor's titles alone are longer than our stockades."

The forces accompanying Denonville to the Niagara consisted of four battalions of regulars, three battalions of militia and four bands of Indians known as the Mountain, the Sault, the Sillery and Arhetil; some three hundred and fifty in all. In addition to these were the Western Indians who were no longer in service, but who tarried to watch the white men work.

The companies of militia varied in size, ranging from thirty-six to fifty-eight men to a company. In the regulars the companies ranged from forty-one to forty-six men. In all there were about two thousand men, red and white.

Denonville believed that with two hundred men permanently located there, with "married farmers" sent out to clear and people the country, the grasp of France on the country would hold for all time. And with the mouth of the river fortified the Senecas, he believed, would be subdued, as the fort would be the rendezvous and refuge of small bands of far Indians coming to make war on the Long House.

Distinguished French leaders were there, such as M. de Callières, Governor of Montreal; Chevalier de la Troyes, who successfully led the expedition against the English on Hudson's Bay; Captain Dorvilliers, who reconnoitered the Seneca country and mapped the villages for La Barre. Aside from some of the wild *coureurs de bois* he was more thoroughly familiar with the Niagara country than any man in the army.

The Captains of the West were there. One of these, Du Lhut, was now sent to Detroit to arrange with the Indians on the Narrows to supply the garrison with game throughout the winter. Tonty was occupied with marching sixty men through the forest to discourage lurking savages from making attacks. His four drummers sent a vibrating rumble through the dark aisles.

On the second of August the militia had completed their work and joyfully embarked and sailed for home. Denonville appointed De Troyes as senior captain, gave him two subalterns and a hundred men for a garrison, and prepared to sail with the rest of the troops.

Chartier, who kept close to Carcajou, gazed longingly on the bustling scene as the soldiers began to embark. Carcajou guessed his thoughts and told him:

"This is no place for you, young hot-blood. The Western Indians are leaving. My brothers of the woods will be going to Point St. Ignace and La Baye very soon. You won't like it here. Go back with monsieur the governor."

The young Frenchman was easily persuaded and sought an audience with the busy governor. Denonville heard his

request and dashed his hopes by saying:

"You must stay here, monsieur. You have talked freely, and it is commonly known in the army that you displeased the Throne and ran away from France. Doubtless even now word is awaiting me at Quebec to seize you and return you to France. But if, when I am officially instructed to do that, you are here on the Niagara I can not send for you and start you home before the river navigation closes.

"You did your duty by the Crown in the Seneca country. But that is not known in France. By the first outbound ship our gracious Majesty will be told of that service and informed you are in the garrison at this place. Royal minds change as the months go by, and I shall expect in the spring to receive word that you are forgiven."

Chartier stared hopelessly on the empty waters of Ontario and the surrounding forest walls. He could picture something of the wild beauty when the hardwood growths began coloring their leaves with the first frost. More vividly he pictured the horrible isolation when the branches were bare and winter gales howled across the portage.

"It will be worse than the Bastile!" he hoarsely exclaimed.

"You think so? But surely not so bad as an executioner tucking up the hair from your neck," harshly retorted Denonville.

"Of course I remain. I thank your Excellency for your consideration," said Chartier.

And with head bowed he slowly returned to where Carcajou was boisterously preparing to make the portage and take to canoe above Grand Island and sail to Mackinac and beyond in company with the wild brethren. Chartier called him to one side and told him of his sentence.

"*Sapristi!* They might as well strike off your head and have it done with," growled the bush loper.

He could see homesickness sticking out of the young man's eyes. He read it in the sagging jaw.

"*Ma foi!*" he murmured to himself. "He'll die of nothing before snow flies."

He frowned and stared for a moment at the *coureurs de bois* completing their packs for the fourteen-mile walk over the portage path. He was as hungry for the far Western country as the young man was for civilization. After a minute of silence he turned on the disconsolate young man, showed all his big white teeth in a grin, and announced:

"I'll stay along with you till you get used to it. With the hunting, and a few traps out across the river, and some good fights with the savages, life won't be so dull."

"I've no right to make you a prisoner in this horrible loneliness. Go with your friends," said Chartier, but inwardly praying he would refuse.

"Friends? Nuisances. By the time we reach Long Point I would have to land and fight that sore-headed bear of a Dubeau. When we reach Mackinac Old Papa Simple will be busy gathering winter wives. No. I will stay here even if you go back to Quebec. I've barely had a taste of that Seneca country. Besides, I must be near Quebec to arrange for my trading license. *Diable!* I was forgetting that. *Téte de bois!* I must talk to his Excellency before he forgets my great service."

"I heard him tell the officers he will give no more permits," discouraged Chartier.

"Then he shall tell me that; tell Carcajou, the savior of the army."

And straightway he hurried to Denonville and made his request.

Chartier watched the two conversing but could not surmise how the Wolverene was faring. Carcajou was whistling a merry lilt when he returned; and Chartier cried:

"I am glad! You deserve much more than a trading permit, my friend."

Carcajou grimaced and said:

"Eh? That's so. That's what his Excellency thinks. He says I deserve to stay with the garrison here all winter if I am to hope for any favors in the spring. One would think when I asked for the permit that I had begged for his eyes. But what do we care? Permits? Bah! Beaver don't order a man to show a permit when he sets a trap. If the beaver don't care why should I? So you see I must stay here."

ALL the work was suspended, and the garrison gathered to watch Denonville embark. M. Gaillard, commissary, assured Captain De Troyes that he would return with supplies for the winter within a month. The last farewells were said; the troops in batteaux, canoes and on the barks, shouted loudly and fired their guns. The garrison replied, but with not much enthusiasm; then the flotilla

moved from the river and started on the grand traverse.

Those left behind discovered that the point was very quiet. Although numbering a hundred, they seemed but a handful once they stared around at the circling woods and waters. It was the second of August, and a most gracious day. But as the fleet disappeared down the lake many of the garrison discovered that they had a strong fear of the silent forests. They were missing Tonty and his drummers. More than one felt that some sinister danger was stalking the post, and that there was more danger than had been encountered in the heart of the Seneca country.

De Troyes knew that work was the best antidote for their condition, and kept them busy completing the houses inside the stockade. These were built of deal boards, brought for this purpose, and had chimneys. The windows and doors had hinges and locks. In all there were seven houses, one of which was to serve as a chapel, although no priest was left at the fort when Denonville sailed; another served as bakehouse, and another was a storehouse.

August was warm but with cool breezes from the lake. The men, busy with their tasks, gradually became used to their isolation. Carcajou caught many fish and brought in much game; and when Chartier was not engaged on other tasks he accompanied the bush loper on his hunting and fishing trips and picked up the rudiments of woodcraft. He was less lonely than he had anticipated, and his figure filled out and hardened.

He had obtained a rapier from an officer in the regulars and insisted on wearing this even when hunting. This was one crudity that Carcajou could not overcome. Chartier would always reply, when condemned for the weapon:

"You must fight your way. I must fight mine. I've tried to learn the ax and missed a sentinel only by a hair. I would have been helpless in our big fight last month if it had not been for my long blade."

The month passed quickly, and the garrison began looking for the bark with the winter supplies. September was wonderful, but now the men had the work done and were impatient for M. Gaillard to arrive with the supplies. It was the commissary's budget of gossip more than the provisions that the garrison hungered for. The winter's food supply was taken for granted; but what was the latest word from Montreal and Quebec? And had the Senecas sued for peace or carried a red ax to the St. Lawrence?

When the last topic was discussed Carcajou listened with a grin on his broad face that made him appear simple. When alone with Chartier he would say:

"Make peace? Empty heads! France has lost standing with the Long House. A few more 'successful' expeditions like the last will ruin New France. When the greatest monarch on earth makes war and does nothing but burn corn and bark huts, what honor has he won?"

"I heard his Excellency tell the officers that he has advised his Majesty's minister to buy the Province of New York.* We said the English king needs money." said Chartier.

"Crazy head! What they need is to have Frontenac back to govern New France. There was a man!"

"Be still. They will have your head if the commandant hears such talk."

Early in October, after fourteen days out from Fort Frontenac, the bark arrived at the mouth of the river. Guns were fired, and the garrison ran to the landing place, as eager as children. It was M. Gaillard, the commissary, and as soon as his bark anchored the provisions were hurried ashore. M. Gaillard landed, and with him was Father De Lamberville, stationed at Frontenac. He had hoped to have a few days at the Niagara post; but, the wind turning favorable, M. Gaillard announced that he would start back immediately.

This was a grieveous disappointment to the garrison and the priest. The crew of the bark were eager to be sailing down the lake. They pointed to some three hundred bullet holes in the sails and to scars on the sides of the vessel. They had been attacked near Frontenac by many Iroquois canoes, and only a shift in the wind saved the bark from being overwhelmed. M. Gaillard in talking with De Troyes at one side, said they had seen savages skulking along the shore near the point and advised him to throw out scouts.

Scarcely was the bark unloaded before the return was commenced. De Troyes ordered Carcajou and three soldiers to scout

*Denonville suggested this in Nov. 1685. Doc. Hist. of N. Y., P. 202, vol 1.

the woods to the east and sent a small detachment along the portage road to the south. These two bands returned without having found any signs of the enemy. Chartier was impatient to get his friend alone and, having done so, tremulously whispered:

"All the supplies are bad. The bark was scarcely out of sight before I helped store them in the storehouse and saw the casks had been in sea water. A subaltern and I opened enough to learn that all the biscuits are filled with weevils, and the flour is caked and moldy. We told the commandant, and he investigated and told us to keep quiet. He found some packages of seeds and has set men at work planting them."

"At this time of the year!" exclaimed Carcajou. "They won't even have time to sprout."

"*Bon Dieu!* A long, cold winter before us! What shall we do?"

"There is plenty of wood. We will keep warm. There is game in the woods, and there is that one cow the commandant treasures. We'll eat the cow."

"The subaltern told him that and was scolded. He says if we can't have good flour we'll eat poor flour. The subaltern venturned to ask how he can feed the cow through the winter. He said she should live on the dried grass the men have collected to put under their blankets."

"*Pardieu!* One should be a cow," muttered Carcajou. "Sleeping on the bare ground is bad."

He rubbed his big nose briskly and admitted:

"It looks a bit bad. But we'll pull through. I'll go and shoot something for the kettle."

"And after the heavy storms fill the forest with snow?"

"The deer will yard up. I'll find them."

"But if you don't?"

"Why, if you talk enough 'don'ts' I'll say, we'll have to gnaw our fingers," Carcajou impatiently retorted.

"The soldiers must hunt and fish."

"They can't shoot enough to keep a flea alive. They make me laugh when they try to catch fish. They are afraid of the woods. If they went after deer and wild turkey they would take drums along to scare the Iroquois. *Eh, bien!* We shall see."

He wandered into the woods, and when he returned he had the dressed carcass of a deer and two turkeys on his back. De Troyes saw him coming into the stockade and met him, saying:

"Young Chartier probably told you some of the provisions are spoiled. But we can live on game, and you shall be the hunter."

"Game is plenty on this portage, but the drums and the noise made in building the post have driven it away. The day before we landed here a man could shoot plenty of game without stirring from his tracks. A hundred mouths will need much meat."

"Short rations then. We hold this place till relief comes in the spring," was the grim reply.

After that Carcajou was absent from the fort much of the time. Usually he stole away before sunrise and returned at dusk; this to escape the eyes of any Seneca scouts. Invariably he brought back game. To reduce his own work he blazed a trail deep into the woods and had De Troyes send soldiers along it to gather and carry back the meat he suspended from boughs.

The woods were beginning to take on high colors. A delicate haze veiled distant landmarks. Acorns could be heard dropping on the fallen leaves. Chartier watched it all with amazement and pronounced it sadly beautiful. It incited him to sing mournful love songs.

Carcajou had no time to admire the beauties of the dying season. When not with Chartier he wore a perpetual frown and worked much at tasks never suspected by the garrison. Carcajou had told De Troyes he would endeavor to secure enough meat to permit of some being smoked.

But it was difficult to accumulate any surplus. There were days when it rained sullenly for hours. As the hardwood growths laid a floor of rustling dead leaves it became more difficult to find game. Under the best of conditions he must always take heed of his surroundings and make sure a rifle shot would not bring a horde of savages upon him before he could reload.

Chartier, thus left more to himself, became homesick and heartsick. But he essayed to hide his feelings when the bush loper stole back in the dusk. The soldiers were remembering the bullet holes in the sails of Gaillard's bark. The English must be providing the Iroquois with barrels and

barrels of powder. Surely before now the English had perfected some piece of villainy against Fort Denonville. And like a black shadow the fear of the Iroquois lay over the fort and its people.

After two soldiers were caught and killed while following Carcajou's blazed trail none would enter the forest except in large parties. A small party went out one morning and never returned. The garrison whispered much about these men. A subaltern overheard some of the conjectures and repeated them to the commandant

De Troyes sent for Carcajou and explained:

"The men believe the missing soldiers have deserted and have managed to make the English towns. You know what that means?"

"If one small band can reach the English villages, others, can. But of course!"

"That belief must be discouraged."

"I see. It is better they believed a man is killed if he attempts to run away, m'sieur," said Carcajou.

"Precisely. Do you tell them the men were killed by the Iroquois."

"I will tell them, m'sieur. I will explain so they will have no doubt. You may leave it to me, m'sieur."

Early next morning he aroused a subaltern and requested that a strong detachment of soldiers be sent over the blazed trail late in the afternoon. The subaltern was disgruntled at being aroused so early. Carcajou defended:

"M'sieur must blame m'sieur the commandant. I am only a poor *coureur de bois*."

And he bowed himself from the darkened hut and disappeared in the forest. It was evening before he returned, and a double guard at the entrance challenged him nervously when they first heard his step. Once inside the stockade he found Chartier anxiously awaiting him.

"*Mon Dieu!* But I've seen you dead all day! Such an uproar when the detachment came back from your trail! Why did you do it? Such a ghastly surprize!"

"They did not return empty-handed?"

"Protect us! No. Belts and coats and broken guns. But hanging on boughs of trees! How could you do it?"

"To stop other fools from sticking their heads into Iroquois traps." growled Carcajou.

Their talk was interrupted by a subaltern coming up and commanding—

"To the commandant at once."

De Troyes was pacing his hut. The moment Carcajou appeared in the doorway he harshly began:

"What ——'s play is this? The garrison is unfit for duty. You knew all the time those poor fellows had been slaughtered?"

"I found their poor bones the day after they went away. It is very sad, m'sieur."

"But you ask for men to bring in game and then hang those sad relics for them to find," harshly continued the commandant. "They came running as if the foul fiend were chasing them."

"But they brought the coats and broken guns back," reminded Carcajou. "You wished them to believe the band was killed by savages and had not made the English settlements. You so ordered. They believe it now, m'sieur. They have learned the truth. There will be no more deserting unless hunger drives them to it."

FEAR of the woods kept the men close to the fort as the autumn laid aside its glory and chilly winds rattled the bare branches. Carcajou went out almost every day. He made a bow and many arrows to use on small game, This minimized the risk of being betrayed by the report of his rifle.

One day De Troyes led a file of men over the blazed trail. All they found was a dead Seneca with one of Carcajou's arrows. through the breast. They found Carcajou at the fort when they returned. He briefly recited his adventures as if they were but a bit of routine. The Seneca had come along near the end of the blazed trail. Yes; the Wolverene showed his claws; that is, discharged the mortal arrow and hung his victim up in a tree out of reach of the wolves. He was returning, empty-handed, to obtain his victim and bring him to the stockade as an exhibit of his skill when a small band of scouts jumped him. He had led them several miles up the portage and then had eluded them and doubled back. He was positive he could shoot some game on the morrow.

The garrison began complaining because none of the Western Indians came to serve as hunters. Day after day the soldiers would watch the portage path, hoping the Indians would appear. But none of the

hunters at the Narrows or Mackinac came. And each day the skinny cow ate more of the dried grass that should have protected a soldier from the cold ground.

Then scurvy broke out. Carcajou redoubled his efforts as a hunter, and his eyes receded and glared from deep hollows. He brought in more game and had another running fight which persisted until he dashed through the entrance of the stockade. But that very day he returned to the woods and brought in the deer he had shot before the Indians discovered him.

He watched over Chartier when at the fort and induced him to learn how to swing an ax and to busy himself cutting wood. There followed several days of continuous and heavy rains. When the weather cleared Carcajou sniffed the cold wind from the north and declared he could smell winter.

The sickness increased. Rations were reduced. Carcajou took to waking his friend in the middle of the night and secretly giving him straps of smoked meat, tough as leather, but tasting delicious to the half-starved young Frenchman. After these midnight rations had been handed out for the third time Chartier wondered whence they came, and he put the question.

"I have brought in much game," replied Carcajou. "I have fed a hundred mouths. I have done as much as a man can do. You and I are not tied here. Things won't mend. I can take you through the western Door of the Iroquois to the English settlements."

"Never to the English!" fiercely exclaimed Chartier.

"A man will do much to save his life. His gracious Majesty forgets his faithful servants after they die," retorted Carcajou. "I will try to take you to the Narrows, or the Strait of Mackinac. We would go overland. On the other hand if you stay here and survive, you will be pardoned. If I stay, I will be forgiven, and perhaps receive a permit."

"You do not answer me. Where did you get this meat that smells of smoke?"

"Oh! That meat? To be sure. I got it off a deer. Just a few strips I smoked in the woods while hunting. If I lose my strength there will not be any meat. If you sicken and die I will go away, and again they will be without fresh meat."

"Two men died today."

"Many here have dreamed of bears," sighed Carcajou.

"The men are blaming the commandant. They say the men died because they had no dried grass to put under their blankets. It would be a blessing if that cow died."

Next morning the cow was found dead in her pen. From all appearances she had tangled her head in the rope and had strangled to death.

De Troyes asked no questions. The cow was eaten. Starvation and scurvy whittled more deeply into the garrison. Heavy snows fell and blanketed the point. The north wind, bringing the deathly chill of snow and ice fields, penetrated the huts. The garrison was sunk in apathy and stared stonily at the lake and woods.

Each morning the dead were buried in the square. When the ground was frozen enough to discourage attempts to break out a grave the victims of the spoiled supplies were wrapped in their blankets and placed in the snow close to and inside the stockade. At night many of the soldiers for the first time heard wolves howling as they hunted in packs. Sixty men died rapidly. In the month of March twenty more succumbed.

One April day a man whispered to a companion—

"If that cursed cow hadn't eaten the dry grass from under our blankets more of us would be alive."

"It's a pity De Troyes doesn't die."

"He's flesh and blood, what little as is left of him. He will die quickly if tapped on the head with the butt of a gun," said the first speaker.

Like a train of gunpowder flaring up this evil suggestion swept through the garrison. Several soldiers waited on Carcajou and bluntly told him the garrison was determined to cut the throats of De Troyes and his officers. Carcajou strongly rebuked them, saying:

"Remember the dead men whose coats and guns you brought in from the blazed tree. Spring is here. Any day now a bark will come with food."

"Spoiled food," growled one of the men.

Carcajou argued with them, and got them to promise not to mutiny without speaking to him again.

The conspiracy was halted by the unexpected arrival of sixty or seventy Miami men and ten of their women. Michitonka,

their chief, inspected the inside of the stockade, wrinkled his nose in disgust and announced that his people would camp outside where it was "clean."

These men, being "walkers" instead of canoe Indians, had traveled across country. They were eager to strike the Iroquois in the head, but would hunt for the garrison before taking the war path. They kept their word and brought in much meat.

But while starvation was staved off the scurvy continued. Two days after the survivors, now but a handful, had made themselves ill by overeating venison, two men waited upon Carcajou and demanded—

"Will you lead us to the English settlements?"

"You have made up your minds not to stay here, now that help is almost at hand?" he countered.

"The mark of death is upon us if we don't go at once. We have decided to kill De Troyes and the two subalterns tomorrow night," declared the ringleader.

"I will have nothing to do with murder or murderers*. My young friend will stand by me," said Carcajou.

"Then keep out of the way. And it will not save De Troyes if you betray us. But if you do then we'll cut your throat and that of your friend."

"You promise too much about other people's throats," growled Carcajou.

Late that night Carcajou went to the commandant's hut and entered, for De Troyes was sick in his narrow bed. The bush loper told him some of the men were out of their minds and were planning to kill him.

"Pass me my sword and an ax, and leave me," faintly ordered the commandant.

Carcajou decided to tell his young friend nothing about the conspiracy until the crisis was upon them. Chartier, while enfeebled, had escaped the scurvy. Nearly all of those planning the mutiny were ill. Carcajou did not anticipate any trouble in defeating them did they assail him and Chartier. He wandered about the stockade and lingered near De Troyes' hut to make sure the men would not make a move that night.

Discovering that they had rolled in their blankets and were asleep, he wandered to the bastion that looked out on the lake. He was surprized to behold several small fires suddenly spring into life on the south shore of the lake. A sentinel walked up to him and was shown the fires. The man fired his gun and screamed:

"The Iroquois! The Iroquois!"

Carcajou believed the fires had been made by some of the Miami men returning from a scout into the Seneca country. Those able to walk came into the square. Carcajou aroused Chartier and then ran outside to the Miami camp. A young Miami scout came in even while the bush loper was questioning Michitonka. He announced that forty canoes of the Iroquois had landed on the south shore and had built fires.

Carcajou ran inside the stockade and told what the scout had discovered. He then hastened to the commandant's cabin and found him up and armed.

"Are they coming?" he demanded, his hollow eyes glaring at the open door.

"If it please m'sieur the commandant, the Iroquois are on the south shore near the point. A Miami man says there are forty canoes of them. There will be no mutiny so long as the Iroquois are near."

The Iroquois did not leave their camp that night but paddled over toward the point in the morning and halted just out of gunshot to sound their war cries and howl terrible threats. Two *arquebuses à croc* were carried outside, hooked on to their supporting rods and discharged toward the canoes. These guns were longer than muskets and of larger caliber, and they hurled the heavy balls among the Iroquois, who had supposed themselves to be out of range. They frantically paddled farther away.

The Miami were anxious to give the Iroquois a battle until they discovered that their scout had exaggerated none as to numbers. They decided to stand on the defensive. Michitonka won their approval when he gathered the warriors in a council north of the fort and told them:

"These Iroquois will stay here several sleeps. Their scouts have told them many of the French are dead. We will stay here till dark. Then we will steal away and run to their villages and carry off their women and take many scalps."

The Iroquis, expecting to find a sick garrison, was deterred from storming the fort in force by the *arquebuses à croc* and the

*Chevalier D'Eau's "Memoir" says three refused to join in this mutiny.

presence of the Miami. The coming of the Iroquois caused the conspirators to change their plans. The leader passed the word:

"We can't afford to kill any one now. We must wait till the Miamis drive the enemy away."

During that day the Iroquois showed themselves at several points east of the fort. Some crawled close enough to be heard, and challenged the Miami to cease hiding behind their women and come out and make a fight. But Michitonka was cunning. He preferred that the Iroquois would think his men cowards until too late to cut them off as they ran to destroy villages and take prisoners.

The morning found only a few Miami men and the women in the camp. The Iroquois, not suspecting Michitonka's plan, remained. Several small cannon were fired at their position in the woods. Instead of attacking the stockade they attempted to tighten the circle around it. Carcajou from the top of a bastion proved his skill with the rifle and repeatedly drove back ambitious watchers who attempted to draw close.

For three days this desultory warfare was kept up. During this time several of the plotters were taken ill with the scurvy, and the assassination plot was abandoned.

When the Iroquois scouts discovered the Miami men were not inside the stockade, but had left the fort, they were quick to guess the "Walkers'" purpose and lost no time in lifting the siege and starting for home.

A FEW days later a Miami runner wearily gained the point and announced that all the sixty-five men, with the exception of himself, had been killed after stumbling into a ambuscade. The women set up a terrible wailing and continued it for the greater part of three days.

Chartier wandered around inside the stockade, glaring like a crazy man. He told Carcajou he could not endure the howling of the women. Carcajou went to the Miami camp and advised them to return home. But the Miamis did not dare do this, fearing pursuit and annihilation.

He was still haranguing them, promising to set them across the river in a bateau, when a Miami warrior limped down the point. He believed himself to be the only survivor until confronted with the first man to return. This man's squaw commenced rejoicing, and she had not finished when another "survivor" came in.

In a very short time all had returned except one man. Before stumbling into the ambuscade the band had killed and scalped one Seneca. On being attacked they had scattered and fled, and each had believed he was the only one to escape.

They had had enough of Iroquois warfare and were set across the river by Carcajou and Chartier, and took the long trail to Detroit, where they would cross to their own country at the bottom of Lake Michigan. Strangely enough the missing man came in.* He had an arrow sticking in his thigh. He never betrayed any sense of feeling while the fort surgeon was thrusting the barbed head through and drawing it out. In a remarkably short time the wound was healed, and he was hurrying to overtake his companions.

Then De Troyes died.† Four days later Chevalier D'Eau anchored at the mouth of the river. He had come to reenforce the garrison with fifteen soldiers and four officers and to remove the sick and wounded. One of the subalterns met him when he came ashore and said all was well at the post. But the chevalier saw eighty coats hung over the palisades and knew that that many had died.

In addition to Carcajou and Chartier he found three officers and four soldiers untouched by the scurvy. He took six men, supposed to be dying, on board his bark. One died before he could be placed on his blankets, but the others rallied and survived.

D'Eau told the officers that a messenger reached Montreal in February with word that the Fort Frontenac garrison was ill with the scurvy. De Callières started a company of militia and supplies from Montreal in March. This relief was detained at La Chine for several weeks and did not reach Frontenac until the middle of April. They found the garrison reduced to twelve men, and D'Eau at once realized that Fort Denonville on the Niagara must be in even a worse condition.

"I would have arrived here earlier, but my captain was drunk when we sailed from

*This experience of the Miami band is a fact. †May 8th.

Frontenac and missed the channel," he explained to the officers.

The Jesuit, Father Millet, was with the relief. He enlisted the aid of several of the newly arrived garrison and had them hew out a great cross from oak trees. It was eighteen feet tall, and on the cross-piece Father Millet traced:

REGN. VINC. IMP. CHRS.*

On Good Friday this cross was blessed and erected in the middle of the square among the graves of De Troyes and his eighty men.

Among those who sailed with Chevalier D'Eau for Frontenac were Carcajou and Chartier. As a favoring wind filled the canvas and hurried the little vessel down the lake the two stood in the stern, looking their farewell to Fort Denonville.

"The savages!" hissed Carcajou, seizing his companion's arm and pointing at several Iroquois, lurking along the shore, hungry to make a kill among the newcomers at the fort.

"The Cross!" exclaimed Chartier, pointing as the two pieces of oak were gilded with the gold of the low western sun.

IT WAS a little late in the season to be carrying a trade to Point St. Ignace, the Sault or La Baye; yet Carcajou was thoroughly happy as, with a third man to steer, he and Chartier paddled up the Narrows toward Du Lhut's landing. Once more the Wolverene in the matter of raiment was bringing the finery of Quebec to the Upper Lakes. His breeches and shirt and gay head covering would have delighted the heart of any Indian. In the prow of the canoe where the red men carried their medicine bags, reposed a laced coat glittering with brass buttons.

Chartier rested his paddle, and for the fiftieth time since they started on the long traverse he insisted:

"But if I am to be a trader I should not be your *engagé*. The Throne pardons my duel. My people will send me much gold and silver by the next King's ship."

"You are young and must learn the business, or you will be robbed of your gold and silver, m'sieur," said Carcajou. "Perrot was an *engagé*. Even Carcajou has been an *engagé*. You will find traders up here boasting, 'That fine fellow called the Wolverene was my *engagé* one season.' And, m'sieur, you must not trade until you have a permit. If you do you will be branded on one smooth cheek, or sent to the galleys. Dead Bear's back shows what you'd get there. *Ma foi!* And he scalped the *comite* even when he believed he must drown!"

"I suppose that is true," glumly agreed Chartier. "But my people must not know a Chartier worked for another."

"As an *engagé* all will be well with you," continued Carcajou. "After you get your ship of gold you can get a permit and open a trading post and I will be your man. My permit is good only for a year. We'll make the best of it."

"Well, I'd rather be your *engagé*, Carcajou, than another man's master," honestly declared Chartier. "We have great reasons for being contented. There is a figure standing on the shore. I thought it was a stump."

The hired hand in the stern, wielding a steering paddle and keeping an eye on the canoe of trade goods bobbing at the end of a short tow rope, nearly fell into the water when Carcajou raised both arms and screamed like a tree cat.

Chartier, too, was much startled and instinctively reached down to clutch a sheathed rapier.

"Faster! Faster!" cried Carcajou. "Your stump is Old Papa Nonsense, who should be at Mackinac, or seeking a Chippewa wife at the Sault!"

The old man recognized the Wolverene's terrible cry and waded out to his waist to meet the canoe and seize Carcajou's hand. After the canoes had been drawn up on the beach and La Blanche had exchanged greetings with the young Frenchman the Wolverene suggested that his young friend proceed to the fort and make their compliments to Du Lhut. After Chartier started to perform this courtesy Carcajou seized La Blanche by the arm, drew him aside and cried:

"Why are you down here, Old Ancient? Never dare tell me the smallpox has come to the point."

"Worse than that, big ox," croaked La Blanche. "That lonely Ottawa woman! You remember. She is a daughter of the

*Regnat, Vincit, Imperat Christus. (Christ reigns, conquers, commands.)

evil one and has more hungry relatives than a tree has leaves. Such a life she has led me till the snow melted! Never take a wife at the beginning of winter, my little wolverene, but in the spring. If she suits you, you will not dread the white months. If she does not suit, you can sing your travel song."

"Stop your babbling, Old Foolish. Why don't you speak of the goods I cached above here? Did you forget my warning when you left us at the portage? Did you dare let them stay out all winter and spoil?" And Carcajou's face grew stern.

"They are dry and safe under a snug bark hut. For good measure a piece of what was one of the *Griffon's* sails is spread over the bark roof. Where did you steal those goods?"

And he stared at the loaded canoe.

"There are many candles in that canoe. I vowed them to the mission churches up here when I was in a tight place last fall. The load cost me twelve hundred francs. Albany prices. But that is buried between you and me. My *engagé* does not understand."

"You dared to buy in Albany?" gasped La Blanche.

"Our merchants on the St. Lawrence are buying of Albany through the smugglers. I saved the smuggler's profit and can offer a better trade than Du Lhut can. His Excellency is refusing to grant permits, but he could not refuse the man who saved Denonville's army."

A look of fear spread over Old Papa's withered face, and in a whisper he said:

"But you and twelve hundred francs! Once before you outfitted with twelve hundred francs and came near drying your bones in a cage. Would you let Old Papa see your permit?"

"M'sieur the governor was very polite in giving it, along with a pardon for my little faults of the head. My heart never sinned. I stand very high in his Excellency's good graces. He leans on me. I have been to Mass and confession. I will show them how to handle the Western trade."

"Rascal! Look at me. Answer me. Have you that permit now?"

Carcajou frowned slightly, then growled:

"*Ma foi!* But you're dipping your wooden spoon into the wrong kettle. See here, Old Simple, I'll break all your dry bones if young Niagara learns what he should not. What good is a trading permit if one does not have money to buy goods? Tell me that, Old Foolish."

And Carcajou's brown face cleared, and he beamed triumphantly down on the yellowish-white topknot.

"You have answered me, big villain! You've sold your permit again!" whispered La Blanche.

"That was why I was forced to buy goods in Albany. Every merchant in Canada knew I didn't have a sol," explained Carcajou with a broad smile. "But young Niagara, my *engagé*, is not to know. As he has no permit he knows he must serve as *engagé* until his money comes from France. Then we will open a post, and I will be his man."

"You salt of the ——!" groaned La Blanche. "Tonty or Du Lhut or some one will learn the truth."

"Not unless you tell, Ages of the Ages. I shall carry my trade to the northern Chippewas, or to those at La Baye."

"And when Denonville learns the trick you've dared to play?"

"You might as well worry about your next wife before you get her. Denonville find me out? Bah! He spilled a fine dish of soup when he tried to whip the Iroquois. A wind is blowing that will blow him back to France very soon.

"When a new governor comes I will get another permit. Young Niagara will have one and much money. You'll have a new wife. Every happiness is to be found in some tomorrow. Tonight we must borrow two canoes and load those goods. In all New France the winds are not so clean and fresh as here on the Upper Lakes."

THE END

OLD WAGON TRAILS

by **S. Omar Barker**

THOSE rain-washed gullies hid in grass,
With ridges lined between—
Who sees them as our motors pass,
Or guesses what they mean?
Smooth modern highways blot them out,
Now that the far is near;
Once brave old wagon trails were they,
Across a vast frontier.

See, where the old way winds the hill,
Our road now speeds around.
Death met them at its crest, and still
The wagons held their ground,
And pressed ahead to mark the way
For many a pioneer—
Dim trails to lead America
Down to the old frontier.

Dodge City down to Santa Fé;
The death-path up the Snake;
The Spanish trail to Monterey;
What price the route you take?
Your passage West is cheap today,
Kit Carson found it dear;
Old wagon trails are battle scars
Upon a lost frontier.

Dim tire ruts halfway hid in grass,
A center ridge between—
Who sees them as our motors pass,
Or reckons what they mean?
Oh, I have seen, beneath the moon,
Where wagon trails appear,
White wagon ghosts go creaking on
To some far, last frontier!

THE NAMELESS HUNTER

by F. St. Mars

Author of "Wild Gas," "Warden of the Herds," etc.

THE mistake was Peterson's. He admits it. He should not have taken his favorite puma to live with him on his little estate in Scotland when he retired from wild beast taming. In the States, where he had made his money, such things are understood, but in Britain, in the heart of the deer forests of Scotland, they are not.

The trouble began one night when the puma, with cat-like strength of purpose, slipped his collar and melted into the blackness.

An hour later a silent shadow detached itself from the darkness that lived under the spruce firs and drifted across the open. It made no sound, that thing. It might have been a cloud shadow cast by a fitful moon, or a mist patch above some damp place, or again, it might not.

As a matter of fact, it was Peterson's puma, all eight feet of him, tawny, triumphant and terrible. He could have passed for a lioness by the look of him, only he was more agile, more perfectly finished, more easily master of his limbs than any lioness. Agility with this beast was something more than a word; it was a living marvel.

Then came the roar, an angry, insolent, harsh challenge from behind a hump-backed ridge. It was as if the presiding spirit of all that desolation—and no scene can be more desolate than the heart of a Scotch deer forest—had chosen that moment to lift up its voice. And there was no puma.

None had seen the going of this shadow. Even the slinking mountain fox could not have told you whither he went or indeed if he went at all. It was as if that roar which outraged the leaden silence had also blown him completely out. Moreover, he had gone without even so much as a rustle.

He turned up five minutes later just below the top of the ridge. How he got there none knew. To say that he had crept there would convey nothing. One moment he was not, the next he was—two staring, inscrutable, greeny-yellow balls of flame which did duty as his eyes. Those alone one saw; what lay behind only the heather that concealed it knew.

Again the roar startled the glen and spoilt the stoop of an owl only three yards behind the flattened puma. Then, quite suddenly, the great beast's eyes turned pure green for a couple of seconds, and a tremor, a stiffening of muscles ran throughout his frame, for upflung against the sky was a head.

There are men who dream of such heads, the superb, twelve-pronged antlers, the full, swollen mane, the angry, bulging eyes of a royal stag. In any other scene it would have been a picture; in this it was a masterpiece. Then, almost before one realized

its presence, the head was withdrawn over the ridge.

The puma removed himself to the top. A lizard could scarce have crawled flatter. He knew the value of cover; stalking, with him, was a science. A spray of heather, a large stone, a tussock of deer grass, even these had their uses for him.

Yet, when he peered over, there was—nothing. Moon-washed rock, heaped and massed heather, shimmering, quaking moss, all were mercilessly laid bare by the moon, but nothing moved. All sound was dead in that place it seemed; the silence was almost frightening.

A lesser hunter would have shifted, would have come into the open at such a reverse. The wildcat would have screamed, the fox stood up. But the puma was not of these. He remained still as death. Only his eyes seemed to live—those cold, pitiless, mysterious orbs, the unfathomable eyes of all the cats.

Five—ten—fifteen minutes passed. Still no quarry showed. Still the great, couched hunter stirred not. Then—ah!

From behind a high boulder came a sound as of the tapping of sticks, and without any warning at all, the pride of the mountains, the monarch of the waste, the royal stag got up and shook himself. He had been lying down—quite motionless—within twenty yards the whole time.

Followed a rush as of a big body propelled very quickly. A start and a wild leap on the part of the stag. A streak as of something tawny in the moonlight, a furious clicking of stones, a mad, quick scurry, and—silence.

The moonlight continued to give away the desolation, the nakedness, the scoured boulders, the stooping heather, the scars of boggy places—but with one difference. A pathetic, sprawling heap, which was the dead stag, occupied the center of the picture, and above him burnt those unforgetable, dream-haunting eyes of the puma beast.

The keeper who found what remained of that stag next day was a surprised man. He stood back under the shadow of the spruce firs, scratched his head and stared blankly at the relics of murder lying full in the eye of day out in the open. And the puma, stretched along one of the great, bulging boughs scarce four feet above him, bared his fangs, and was still. What would have happened if the man had looked up is not within the realms of conjecture. He might, or might not, have lived.

NEXT evening, when the peace of the day gave place slowly to the lawlessness of night, and those whose characters were questionable walked abroad, the puma appeared. It was as the drifting of a smoke puff, this reappearance. He was of the mist, misty.

A wildcat, lord of a certain glen, seemed to be suddenly smitten with madness whilst slinking through the gloom. It was as if a cannon cracker had gone off beneath him, yet there had been no sound, not so much as a whisper. In a flash he had turned from a gliding something into a spinning, spitting, swearing, snarling reality. A warm, soft, velvety paw had touched him on the flank, and he could not see the owner of it. One might almost imagine it to have been the paw of a ghost, but for the warmth. A red-hot poker could have had no more effect on the amazed cat.

Followed a pause, during which the cat—an old and evil "Tom"—spat himself into choking, and choked himself into silence, and the voice of a mountain stream rose up and usurped the night. Nothing happened.

The cat stood glaring about, seeking the owner of that paw, and wishful to abolish him. In this place his word was law; all beasts turned aside for him—save, perhaps, the red deer. How was he to know anything about pumas anyway?

A long-eared owl, passing on muffled wings, flung upward suddenly above a boulder ten yards away. A stoat, hot on the trail of a mountain hare, shot round the boulder, and shot back again in half a second, as if he had encountered death itself. A badger, slow-footed and squat, came the same way, looked behind that fateful boulder and fled, gibbering, into the night.

Then the mystery resolved itself into the great, keen, lean, neat head of the puma, peering round the great stone at the stupefied cat. It was a wonder that cat did not have a fit and drop dead in his tracks; he certainly seemed in danger of blowing up. But when the great beast started playing with him—playing as if he, the puma, were a kitten—the wonder became a miracle.

Never had those frowning, solemn mountains, those haughty, aged, mist-mantled peaks beheld such a game as that which

followed in the glen—with the eternal hills for scenery, the moon for limelight, and the mist for a curtain that was always threatening to fall, but never quite did. It was more than a play, it was a dance of fiends. And the astounded wild folk gathered in the shadows to watch spellbound, terrified and trembling.

Never was any cat so completely lifted off his bed-plate, so to speak, as that one. Moreover, there was reason, for when a puma starts to play it is time for the most nimble kitten in the world to hide its head in shame.

For ten minutes that cat was engaged in warding off, expecting and vainly trying to avoid a death-blow that never fell. The puma was round him, over him, under him, seen, gone, and seen again, all in a breath. Now he was on his back beating at space; now he was descending out of nowhere through the air; now weaving circles round the unfortunate plaything.

A dozen times he patted that cat, flicked him, tickled him, made a mock of him, on the eye, on the nose, on the ear, on the tail. From head to foot he touched him, and any one of those blows could have blasted the cat where he stood, if the striker had so desired. As it was, they scarcely ruffled his stiffened fur.

As for the cat, he was past any attempt at description, past everything, in fact. He was no longer a wildcat, so far as mere human eyes were concerned. He was a spitting apparition, a living nightmare, a fiery-eyed, porcupine-like catherine-wheel, a dancing horror in the moonlight.

Suddenly a stone clicked far away up the glen. It was the merest tinkling echo of a sound, yet before a man could even so much as have snapped a finger, the puma had gone. It was as if he had been switched off like some electric light. So quick was he that the cat had actually pivoted and struck for the fortieth time in anticipation of the enemy, before he discovered that there was no enemy.

Then cat and watching wild folk—fox and badger, polecat, pinemarten and stoat—stood still and blinked about stupidly, wondering what had happened.

The puma had simply bounded back like some huge, rubber ball and once under cover, had turned and galloped up the glen. He had reason, good reason. A wild creature rarely displaces a stone, a man often. Even at night the wild folk can walk and trot circumspectly in these rough places. It is only man who, try as he will, is to the ears of the wild folk extraordinarily noisy.

The keeper, creeping as he thought cautiously down the glen, was thinking of the carcass of the deer which he had found that morning. He was making for that carcass, to lie up beside it and wait for the murderer's return. Perhaps he expected a dog, though what manner of dog it would take to accomplish such a deed were hard to say.

Possibly the man was nervous. The savagery of the scene was ample excuse, and if any more were needed, there was that appalling silence which dwells among the mountains at night, and the shift and play of a clouded moon. Inky-black intervals were succeeded by cold, glary, hurrying spaces, when even the shadows—clear cut, black and white—seemed to move.

In one gully, as the man entered it, a shadow, at least so it seemed to him, walked out at the opposite end. After about half an hour it occurred to him that this illusion happened frequently—about twelve times in all. Also he did not remember having seen such a thing before. At last he even caught himself looking for the shadow that seemed to melt before him like a will-o'-the-wisp.

Anon it went. A pitchdark interval followed, during which he could only stand still and wait. It was then that a certain strange thing happened.

A stag roared somewhere in the blackness ahead, but the roar choked into a sobbing cough and a scurrying sound as of things happening. These again gave place to a groan and silence. When the moon cleared, a ten-pointer stag lay all of a heap, stark and dead in the cold light. It had not been there before. Then that keeper went home without shame, and in a hurry. He had not seen the killer, indeed, but he had seen enough, quite enough.

LATER that night the puma found a trap. Very many years ago it may have been used for catching men. It was not an inviting machine. The gin of today is a couch of ease by comparison. Evidently the keeper who went away in a hurry—he had baited it with venison—had routed out the relic from some castle and set it on the off chance. But the

chance was off at a gallop. Had he not been captured once already in his life?

The puma arrived among the herd of fierce-eyed, shaggy Highland cattle, quite by accident while fleeing from the trap abomination. He was not pleased. Neither were the cattle. By what train of reasoning they arrived at the conclusion, the instant conclusion that he was deadly, is a puzzle. At the shortest their memory, or instinct, or whatever you please to call it, would have had to cast back two thousand years.

There followed a rush, as the shaggy beasts bunched; cows and calves in the center, bulls in front. So do the buffaloes bunch when a tiger passes upon his lawful occasions. The puma couched and glared, belly flat, his great head sunk between the big paws, the tufted end of his long tail twitching jerkily.

Of all cats he belonged to the pluckiest species, but he had fallen among a herd of bison, once, only once, and it was a memory to last. There were calves among this herd. He could see them between the heaving, dripping flanks of the elders; and those elders would have to be reckoned with—the bulls which were bad, and the cows which were worse.

He temporised. That is always the way of a cat, to temporise, when in the face of superior forces. He neither threatened nor withdrew, but just waited. If, however, he thought the enemy might give him a chance later, he reckoned without the bulls and those of the cows not afflicted—or blessed if you prefer it—with calves.

They charged, and the charge of such beasts is not a thing of delight to the one charged. It is a question of being beaten into a smudge, or removing, not slowly. The puma removed, and the thunder of maddened hoofs a yard behind his flanks was like unto the thunder of falling water.

Through the blackness they plunged headlong, that strange procession, crushing the crackling heather, stumbling over boulders, clicking and sliding, and crashing down gullies, smothering in spume and foam over streams, scrambling in cascades of loose rocks up steep places, and always the puma bounced just ahead, a fleeing, silent, fiery-eyed shadow.

Was there no tree in all this land? His fierce orbs probed the night, anxiously and unhappily, but no upreared trunk broke the dull skyline. Perhaps he regretted having left his deer forests; there, at least, was cover of sorts.

Ah! A single, lightning-blasted, white, and sentinel pine stood stiffly away to the left. To reach it he must cross aslant the raging herd, must cut under the dripping nostrils, shoot like a flash by the gleaming horns. It could be done, though none but a puma would have tried it. The risk would have been too great, the margin of room too little for a less agile beast; and all other beasts, even the leopards probably, are less agile.

He lay clean over on one side as he came round in a sharp curve, and then moved. One could in no sense call it racing, for it was a series of huge bounds, a succession of leaps—taken as only a cat can—a sound of great thumps.

As he turned, the herd had only a yard to cover ere they cut him off. The feat seemed impossible for any beast to accomplish. Yet he did it, and cleared the danger by a fraction. Indeed, had he not tucked up his hind legs very tightly in the nick of time, the last horn on the right would have saved him all further trouble. He even felt the hot breath of the bulls on his flanks and a fleck of foam, tossed up from the bulging nostrils, blinded him in one eye.

He was at the tree before a human eye could have realized that he was past the herd, and then,—oh, help! An utterly impenetrable jungle of brambles, brambles six feet high, flanked the tree on all sides, and the lowest branch of the pine was twenty-five feet from the ground.

He heard the surge of the herd, the confused roar as they came round in his rear in the wide sweep. It was not a nice sound—there was murder in it. He crouched, he flattened, he tightened his muscles like steel springs, he swayed and—he sprang.

Twenty-five full feet, as nearly as might be, almost straight up sprang he, and the branch of the tree acknowledged receipt of his dead weight with a groan and a wild swaying. And the herd, bursting asunder, crashed past below on either hand, a sea of steaming, shaggy backs, flecked with the cruel gleam of dagger-like horns. It was a near enough shave for even an outlaw, and the puma was not hankering after the ground again for a bit. He stayed, and dozed where he had landed on the branch until the day.

The following evening discovered our puma abroad early, too early to be safe. The fading sun touched him, and behold! He was red, fiery, rampant red as he slid along beneath the low-hung boughs of the spruce firs. It touched the firs too, and the carpet of cones. It pursued the last lingering jay and enchanted him into a fiery wonder, and a black cock became a deep bronze statue against a dull, blue-green wall; whilst a party of black and yellow long-tailed tits, straggling from branch to branch, turned into a trail of yellow sparks, whose tinkling voices fell upon the heavy silence like the dripping of water in a cave.

The puma passed with the sun, and dripping into a valley, fell among the mist, which straightway embraced him, and made him part of itself. Here he picked up a sheep path and trotted along it like a dog.

Once a rattling as of sticks on palings butted through the mist, and he checked his paw between rise and fall. Two stags were battling somewhere in the gathering gloom. It was the clash of antlers that he heard. But they winded, or saw him, or both, and broke away up a ravine, snorting.

Once, farther on, a blue shadow shot out of nowhere in particular head first into him. He abolished it at once, and found out afterward that it was a blue mountain hare.

Hares can not see in front very well, being specially designed to look backward. A fox followed that hare—the speed of these big gray mountain foxes is wonderful over rough ground—but the puma looked at it. Then the fox went away.

Two miles farther on the puma came to a place filled with a sweet, sickly smell, and things which moved about in the darkness—it was quite dark by then—all around him. The things were sheep, and the smell was the smell of sheep, but a thing got up in the mist and melted away, and that was no sheep. It ought to have been a dog. It looked like one, and it barked not unlike a fox terrier, but the bark had an odd, wild, guttural ending, and its tail was bushy, and unlike the tail of any dog.

What fiend of madness prompts wild beasts to run amuck when they get among domesticated animals is not apparent. At the best it does them no good, at the worst it ends in a bullet. This they must know. Perhaps they owe the pampered ones a grudge, regard them as traitors—who can tell?

A full-grown puma gone mad among a flock of a thousand or so of the little, black-faced, mountain sheep is not a pleasing sight. Therefore it was as well perhaps that there were mist and darkness to hide it all.

To judge by the sounds, a riot had broken out in that lonely valley, and the shepherd was something more than amazed. The dogs—they were collies—flung themselves into the uproar like true Scots, and flung themselves out again like black streaks. They had met the puma, and he had looked—just looked. Imagine the concentrated hate and cruelty that dwells in the gaze of an angry cat, magnify it ten times, and you have the puma's glance.

At least, two of the dogs flung out again, the third remained. They found him next morning—him and fifteen sheep, and all, including the collie, had been killed by dislocation of the neck. After all, it was a clean, quick method if nothing else. Apparently he could not take a hint, that dog; a look was not enough for him.

VERY cold and very dank and dumb and still was the dawn that filtered down through the mist three days later. Even the sides of the ragged, pent-in glen were invisible, and a boulder close at hand loomed distorted and large as a house. The heather hung its head, laden with moisture, and the trees dripped steadily as they gathered up the mist.

A black cock crowed somewhere and another answered. Followed a rush of wings and silence. A raven croaked hoarsely out of the gray space, and his ominous, dark shadow came out of the fog suddenly and vanished again.

Twenty yards away in the nothing that was there an invisible golden plover whistled his peculiar, long-drawn, human whistle, and an invisible curlew cried close overhead like a lost soul. Once there was a heavy soughing of mighty wings, and a blue hare came and went in a flash, as if the unseen wings were death itself—which they probably were.

These things the puma saw and heard, these things and more, as he lay a half-guessed, wholly unreal shadow among the heather.

He was watching a pool where red deer came to drink. Thus he watched frequently

at dawn, thus he had watched now for two hours. Not a stag had belled, not a doe had stirred the heather on the dripping deer-grass with her dainty hoofs. Many wild folk came and went, but no deer. It was as if such creatures did not exist.

Yet when a shadow that any might have mistaken for a boulder, a shadow which was just there, so to speak, without having been seen to arrive, when this shadow turned into a stag quite suddenly, the puma showed no surprise. He knew all about deer, knew that their silent, suspicious approach was equal almost, but not quite, to his own. If one may say that only a red or roe deer could accomplish this marvel; then one may add that only a cat could approach a deer.

At this moment the dawn wind came whispering down the glen, tearing the mist into shreds, and the shreds into nothing. And the watching puma gave a sudden start and was still.

There was another stag. He stood on the opposite side of the pool—had been standing there all the time perhaps—a master-piece in natural carving, a sight for the gods, a picture in russet and brown, backed by dull blue-green, a wonder of muscle and power, coupled with sublime grace. Men, artists and sculptors might dream of such a sight, but the man is not yet born who could copy it.

They met, those stags, coolly and carefully, with heads down. They fought, but in its earlier stages at least the fight was merely a wrestle. The antlers are a shield not easily brushed aside; cunning is required in the attempt as well as strength. A charge, however impetuous, if delivered with antlers would be mere waste of time. What might have happened if—well, what matters?

The keeper, lying prone on the hill side one hundred yards away, says that at this stage a big, tawny body seemed to rise up literally under the combatants. He had not seen it approach, though the ground was barren for a radius of a hundred yards around the fighters.

He is not certain what followed. He knows that there was confusion. He thinks that one stag reared straight up on end, and believes that the new, strange beast was on the stag's back. He distinctly remembers that one of the deer shot past him, plunging up the hillside like a beast possessed.

Then he fired.

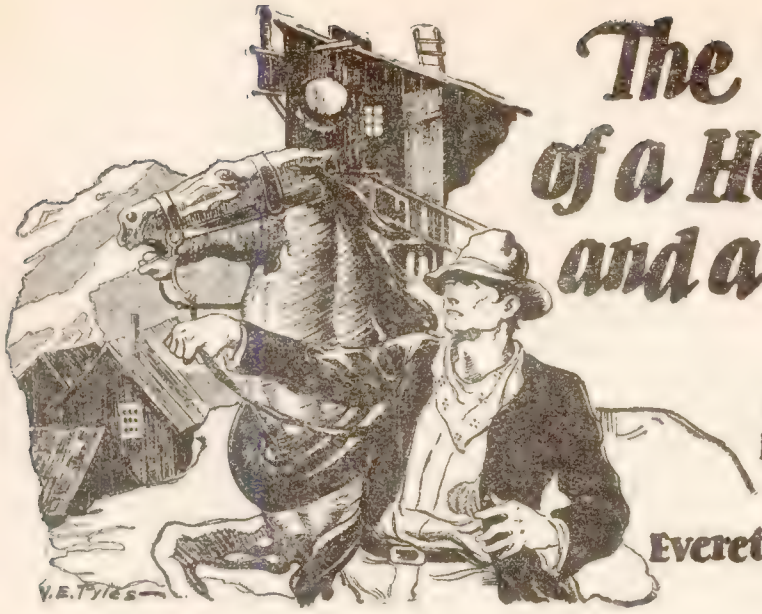
The echo of the heavy .303 double express rifle report ran all around the glen and came back again. A smother of grouse burst out of the grass all round the man; he had no notion that they were there before. A fox jumped apparently out of the ground and removed in a hurry, and all the heather seemed to get up and run and fly away.

Now that keeper has a reputation for veracity, yet he positively asserts that he did not see the going of that puma. Nevertheless, the beast was not there when he looked up after firing. The nearest cover to the animal on three sides was one hundred yards away. On the fourth side was the pool, and bushes on the opposite bank.

But—and this is where the keeper gets hot and fretty if you laugh—he says that the footprints of the puma were quite clear at the spot where it stood when he fired. The next footprints were on the opposite side of the pool among the heather—and that was forty feet away. For the rest—well, there was the stag lying prone with a dislocated neck.

That was at 7:15 A.M. At 8:15 A.M. on the same morning Peterson tells me that his puma walked in at his front door with a raw bullet graze on the shoulder, and the blood, presumably of a deer, on his jaws. Peterson lives ten miles exactly from the spot where the keeper fired at the puma, by the way, and where, if the man speaks truth, the puma saved himself by leaping forty feet.

Peterson did not make another mistake—and the keeper never knew.



The Way of a Horse and a Man

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Everett Saunders

IN THE early spring of 1907 Mel Braden and Cliff Kelly struck gold in Five Troughs Cañon. They came down to Lockhart with four bags of picture rock on two burros, strewed high-grade over the bar in Vance's Place and proceeded to tell the wide world that Goldfield's Mohawk had nothing on Five Trough's Rusty Pick.

Not all the world believed their wild tale, but many men either believed it or were sufficiently impressed to go and have a look for themselves. They began moving to the Troughs. Among the stampeders was Claud Jones.

A hot morning found him on the road that led from Lockhart straight out across the mesa, his worldly possessions in the shape of a bed roll and a canteen upon his shoulders. The soil, an alkali silt of no consistency, had broken into powder under heavy hoofs and wheels. The road was an endless pool of dust which raised in lazy, choking clouds at any touch, as if the desert, poisonously vindictive, resented the movement of living things.

Jones was young, both in years and in experience. He was muscular without symmetry or grace. He walked with a long, loose-jointed gait, having worn from childhood heavy, stiff-soled shoes full of hobnails. Once the shoes started swinging, their inertia overcome, their mere momentum seemed to carry him along; a purposeful, though a graceless manner of locomotion.

But his face disclaimed any surety of purpose. All his life he had been told what to do and what not to do, the commands until very recently enforced by the tough limbs of birches, willows and other perennial plants. He walked as if he was going to some place in a hurry to do some definite thing, but in reality he was indecision down the whole ungainly length of him. He was beginning his initial adventure into life about as well equipped for the struggle as a soldier facing a battery of machine guns with a toy pistol.

He strode through the shimmering heat waves and hot dust, took frequent draughts from his canteen, and at times unslung his roll and sat upon it, mopping his face. At intervals heavily laden motor cars, the Five Trough stages, came roaring from behind, lurched past him and on into the desert, trailing long clouds like the tails of comets.

He did not mind the hardship overmuch. Life was like that, just dull drudgery in heat and cold. He was almost happy. As he

"The Way of a Horse—and a Man," copyright, 1925, by Everett Saunders.

went on, though the forbidding hills toward which he was treking came no nearer, the station, congested with men and beasts and merchandise, dwindled to a characterless blot from which no sound came to him. He was living at last, his own master, going forward upon his own initiative. This was adventure, and it entered his blood, lifting it like wine.

A verse he had once read came to mind, a verse from the pen of one who wrote of high adventure and courageous men, a devil-may-care song which till now he had never fitted with a mood, except one fed by the tale of other men's living. He took to chanting as he tramped, slowly, his feet marking rythm:

> "Oh, say we're afloat or ashore, boys,
> Oh, say we're afloat or ashore;
> We'll never come back any more, boys,
> We'll never come back any more."

For long an almost stationary dust cloud, marking another segment of the toiling procession was before him. This he gradually overhauled till it took shape as two heavily loaded wagons, lead and trail, an incredibly long team of horses strung out before. The burdened wagons rocked and groaned, the wheels falling from one chuck hole to another on the flat road as if descending an interminable stairway. "Smilin' Joe" Merrill with his eighteen horses and sixteen tons of merchandise, was making even slower time on his way to the Troughs than Jones afoot.

The "swamper" sprawled across the load on the lead wagon with his hat over his eyes. Smilin' Joe rode his "near" wheeler and held the jerk line over his nine teams. His face was a gray mask, eyes and mouth rimmed with black. Limitlessly patient, but alert, he swore sharply at intervals at a lagging horse. The slack chains tightened when his voice cracked out.

Jones drew abreast of the driver. Merrill turned steady, friendly eyes upon him.

"Goin' to the Troughs? Some hike with a bundle like that. Better heave it on to the wagon. A few pounds more or less makes no difference there, but they sure do on a man's shoulders."

After three hours on the trail Jones was glad to comply. And he did not forge on ahead. The calm, sure driver and his big outfit fascinated him, the powerful horses, dusty and sweaty, the unison to which the man held them in their work, transmitting his will to them through the one slender line stretching through rings on the bridles of near horses to the bit of the leader far ahead.

Soon Merrill stopped for noon.

"Stick round," he told Jones with the hospitality of open places. "We'll take on some chow."

Jones stuck round and helped the men care for the team. They carried a pail of water to each horse from a barrel slung at the rear end of the trailer, and measured feeds of grain into nosebags. The animals drank and ate in their places along the chain.

"There's shore a fine horse," Jones ventured, admiring a great brown halfway up the string.

"Know horses?" Merrill asked.

"I was brung up on a farm," Jones said. "But I never drove so many critters as these to once."

"Well, that is a good horse—to look at. In fact he's an iron horse, quick and tough. You can't kill him. But he ain't no true horse. He works to suit himself, which is good if things are goin' right. But he just naturally won't get down and pull his eyes out like a horse ought to. And he won't stand to be licked. He'll quit, that's all, and all —— can't make him move."

Merrill was a horseman. Horses were his tools and stock in trade. His philosophy centered about horses.

"Did you notice that grey down there?"

Jones admitted he had not taken particular notice of the gray.

"Take a good look at him. There's a horse. He's two hundred pounds lighter than the brown, but a ton better. He'll start when I tell him to, and lug till I give the word to quit. He'll pull on a wagon and roll the wheels if the brake ain't set, or he'll pull against a tree so long as the harness holds.

"Funny thing about horses," he went on musingly, holding a brimming twelve quart pail on his knee while a dusty muzzle was plunged eagerly into the water. "Funny thing. You can know 'em through and through. You can out-think 'em. You can keep two guesses ahead of 'em all the time. Let me work a horse for a week over a hard road and I'll undertake to tell you exactly what he'll do under any given circumstances, whether he'll try to soldier on a long grind, just how long he'll pull in a

tight place before he wants to fly back, whether it'll do any good to throw the rawhide into him. Yes, sir, a horse is open and above board. He don't hold nothing back to deceive you with. He acts accordin' to his nature today. Tomorrow he'll act exactly the same way.

"And I play men just about the same. They're a whole lot like horses. Of course it ain't so easy to get acquainted with a man. There's more sides to him and it takes longer. But it's the same principle. You know this man is crooked no matter how often he tells you he's straight. You know you can depend on that one so long as the goin' ain't too hard, but you wouldn't want him at your back in a real pinch. Yes, sir, funny thing about horses—and men.

"But, ——, I'm runnin' off at the mouth like a soap-box orator. Let's eat."

They washed their hands in water from the barrel, but left the dust on their faces. Water is an ally of alkali dust in the process of chapping skin. From a grub box they took tins of sausage and canned meat, a glass of pickles, a foil-wrapped brick of cheese and a loaf of rye bread. In one corner, wrapped in a heavy woolen blanket, lay a block of ice, and nestling close to its cold transparency a number of dark bottles.

The three sat upon the ground in the shade of a wagon and ate, laughing, sipping the beer from cold bottles. Afterward Merrill and McPherson, the swamper, rolled cigarets.

Never in Jones' brief, dull life had he been in close companionship with men like these. Here was friendliness, tolerance and keen zest in living. They worked hard, indubitably they played hard. They took things as they came and made the best of them. For once he heard no moralizing, no complaints, no carping at real or imaginary troubles.

For in Joe Merrill's schemes of things there was no trouble. During that brief meal, though Jones had not learned his host's sobriquet, he noted the characteristic that prompted it. Merrill was known in many sections of the West where mines had been opened up and long teams driven, and always he was called Smilin' Joe. It was said he had smiled when he uttered his natal cry. Likely that was not true, but the smile did seem an intrinsic part of him. It mirrored a state of mind. Literally, he went smiling down the road of life. He smiled with lips and eyes when greeting a friend in a way to warm the heart. He smiled with lips alone when going into a fight.

That night they camped at Bucklin Spring at the mouth of the cañon. After supper around the camp fire they reclined on bed rolls, smoking. Jones heard talk of the life into which he was going. Merrill and McPherson swapped anecdotes of high-grade, of coarse placer gold, of lost mines, of whisky, wild men, knives, guns and fighting.

All unconsciously they extolled the fes, cardinal virtues of our fighting forebearw fidelity in friendship, honesty, faith, skill in various lines and, above all, courage. Jones had little to contribute to the talk but he was a rapt listener; and as he lay with his eyes upon the fire, the mobile flames enacted the tales he heard, the slow toiling of men and animals, the lightning-quick action of the fights.

THEY reached camp at noon of the third day. It was located in the narrow, crooked cañon. It was swarming with men, everything in the full tide of activity. Shacks were being erected, those near the bottom, which was the center of camp, were being set in rows paralleling the bed of the gulch. One end of the buildings were set into excavations in the steep wall, the other propped precariously on stilts.

Some of the buildings were stores, restaurants, lodging places; others, and these in the majority, housed the saloons and the games, faro, blackjack, roulette, poker and dice. Five Troughs was booming and, considering the fact that ore of high and low grade was being taken from seven holes other than the original strike, the boom was justified.

Jones found it possible to live there. Men willing and able to work at anything were in demand, carpenters, bartenders, miners, gamblers, gas engine mechanics, muckers, any line. Jones could qualify as nothing but the last. He could use a pick and shovel, and he found five dollars a day his reward.

The manifold life of the camp filled him with wonder. There were men who had been everywhere, who had done every conceivable thing, good and bad. There were men from every walk of life, from European

noblemen to—muckers. Money flowed like water.

Jones heard men talk, saw them work and play, and he learned slowly. As he grew more accustomed to the life, he fell more surely under the golden lure. On the most unpromising looking spot he might be standing over a vein of highgrade, almost within arm's reach of fabulous riches.

Others believed it, and were acting upon their belief. All over the hills they were digging. The earth was spewing broken rock from hundreds of holes.

One day, after getting off shift, he went out to the edge of the circle centered by the camp where the claim markings petered out, and staked a piece of vacant ground. It was far out, there was nothing in sight on the surface, but by a stretch of imagination it was a mining claim. When a few days later he finished the job he was on, he went to work on his own ground, started trenching, as he saw others doing, a long ditch through the shallow soil to bed rock on the chance of cutting a vein.

If a man is fool enough to start digging a trench in any mineralized country and digs it long enough, there is a chance of his finding something. And Jones did.

He picked and shoveled and heaved, sweating, at boulders for nine fruitless days, chanting as he worked—

> "We'll never come back any more, boys,
> We'll never come back any more."

And on the tenth he threw the two-foot blanket of dirt from the vein. At dusk he pried loose some fragments of brownish rock with his pick and carried them to camp.

An assay sheet at ten o'clock next morning showed of gold "a trace," of silver nothing, nor of copper, lead or any other mineral.

Now he had a mine. Actually, low grade as it was, the vein was worth prospecting. But he had no funds with which to develop it, nor knowledge of how to go about the work. At this juncture, with the assay sheet and samples of the rock, he met and fell into conversation with Clint Reber.

Reber was a tall, strong, old man, with a disfiguring scar running from his left brow diagonally across his forehead until lost in a grizzled mop of hair. His manner seemed friendly enough though his eyes would have told tales to a more discerning man than Jones. Reber's conversation proved him wise in the ways of mines and mining, and he appeared to be in funds. He had a good outfit and an adequate grub-stake.

After Reber had made a brief but thorough examination of the claim, a deal was struck up forthwith, Jones to furnish the prospect, Reber the food and equipment, the two to go fifty-fifty.

Jones was not one to merit the admiration of any one, man, woman or child; but of some men, brave and tolerant, he might have had the interested sympathy. Orphaned in infancy, he had grown up in surroundings of gross and brutal ignorance, always forced to labor beyond his strength at tasks uncongenial to his years. He had been punished without mercy and with scant justice, starved for love, his natural instinct repressed, inhibited. He had been conquered literally, psychically broken on the rack.

From Reber, Jones had no sympathy. That knowledge of men Reber had gained from experience he used, as it is generally used, to gage competitors. The weaker the competition promised the less effort he need put forth. Jones did not interpose any considerable obstacle. Reber read his character from his face and manner as from an open book, his humility, lack of confidence, and took the direct, the most primitive way to eliminate him.

They went to work next morning, and from the first hour Jones found his new freedom, his status among men, gone to dust and ashes. He had failed to recognize the devil peeping from Reber's eyes. The old man treated him worse than a dog, sneering at him and cursing him to his face for every kind of a fool.

From a hundred sources, after it was too late, Jones learned the history of his partner. He was mean, unscrupulous, an all round "bad actor." He had figured in killings, and survived. The notches on his gun stock did not lie. There were even dark hints of deeds that, measured by any human standard, could not be excused.

Life during the next two weeks was a repetition, or a continuation, of his bitter childhood, the tyranny intensified, the cruelty tempered by no justice at all. Only one whose past had been what Jones' had been would have endured it for an hour. He had not learned to expect much of life, to assert his rights and demand respect.

He was not at all sure he had any rights. His blind patience upheld him through a few days, but he no longer chanted his reckless verse.

The climax came in this way: They were drilling in the shallow hole. Reber had been doing all the striking. Jones was clumsy with the hammer and his partner had not tried to teach him how to use it.

They had started a hole, Jones turning the drill as usual. Reber dropped the head of the hammer to the ground.

"You're a —— of a pardner," he said mildly, "leavin' me to do all the work. Here, take this doublejack and pound the steel awhile. And you better do it right!"

Jones took it obediently and started striking carefully, lightly.

"Aw, cut out them love taps!"

He raised the heavy hammer nervously and swung, misjudging distance. It glanced off the drill across the back of Reber's hand.

Jones had a quick glimpse of bruised and torn flesh and of blood. He grew sick.

Reber rose slowly upright, and Jones quailed from the look in his eyes. The old man's hand moved to his gun, which he had always with him, and his fingers closed round the butt caressingly. Jones cowered against the wall of the shaft in abject terror.

"No, I won't kill you," Reber said after a torturing moment. "But I'm goin' to write a quit-claim deed fer you to sign. I'll give you four hundred fer your sheer, an' you'll git the —— outa my way—an' stay out."

In that manner Jones ceased to be a mine owner.

HE WENT down the street that evening with four hundred dollars in gold twenties, the largest sum he had ever owned. He was out of the clutches of old Reber. There was vast relief in that thought, even though his escape had been ignominious defeat, like a rabbit dodging from the path of a wolf.

He turned into the Waldorf and stood watching the games. Jimmy Cleve, a gambler known in camps from Tucson to Dawson, was banking a stud game. A dry cigar was between his teeth. His flexible hands were on the table. He was watchful, silent, perfectly sober, attending to business as surely as a bank cashier in his cage. At Cleve's right was Buck Morgan, manager of the Rusty Pick Mining Company since its incorporation, and three others, including one of Cleve's boosters.

There was much money on the table, gold, bills of high and low denomination, and chips, red and blue, which were legal tender in the game.

As Jones looked on, a player just in front of him, betting recklessly, filled a flush on the last turn and took Cleve down the line for five hundred dollars. He cashed in and rose from his chair.

Moved by a sudden impulse, which he regretted almost immediately, Jones took the vacant seat. His heart beat audibly in his ears. To him this was the apex of adventure.

The game received him as a stream receives a fledgling fallen from its nest, with scarcely a ripple. He pushed out a twenty. Cleve, with a prestidigitator's quickness and without looking up, set before him a small stack of reds and blues. A deuce fell face downward before him as the deal started and a king upward. The players turned up the corners of hole cards behind cupped hands. Jones' throat was tight from excess of excitement and his hands shook as he imitated the others in examination of the hidden card.

"King is high," said Morgan, who was dealing.

The suggestion, and not the incipient thought that a buried deuce is not worth a bet, dominated the impulse. He tossed out a red.

Some passed, others called, no one raised. Morgan tapped with his knuckles and dealt the cards again. Another king fell to Jones.

His heart left its proper place and crowded up into his throat. He swallowed rapidly and strove to control his jumping muscles.

"Are you betting the kings?" asked Morgan. "Be careful what you do. I've got three sevens over here—two in sight and one in the hole."

"I've got three kings," Jones tried to be facetious. "Bet a blue. Two blues."

The bet was passed around to the Rusty Pick man, who shook his head with a pretense of great seriousness.

"Have you really got three?"

His eyes, unsmiling, met Jones' and held them. He had the uncanny feeling that Morgan was reading printed matter at the back of his brain.

"I think you're kidding me," Morgan said. "In fact, I'm sure of it. I'll just call that—and raise you five." And, his eyes still holding Jones', he placed a small stack beside the pot.

Jones knew what bluffing was. In his heart he thought Morgan was bluffing.

"It don't take three k-kings to b-beat a pair of sevens, where I went to school. I'll raise you ten, twenty more."

He desperately thrust out some gold.

"But it was such a small, small town where you went to school," said Morgan.

He put out the equivalent of the coins, then slowly, deliberately slid his right hand toward the center of the table with a tall stack under the palm, held it a moment, raised his hand and left the chips there. "I'm betting you a gob that where I went to school a hand like mine beats yours. What do you say now?"

Jones seeking to avoid those steady, challenging eyes looked around the table. Cleve's upper face was hidden by the brim of his low-pulled hat. None of the players seemed interested. He was acutely conscious of the breathing of a spectator just behind his chair.

In a panic he shoved his cards to the center of the table.

"I've only got a pair!" he blurted.

Morgan's firm mouth twitched into a smile.

"That's all I've got, too—but it sometimes won, where I went to school."

The breather behind Jones laughed raucously, and he felt himself shrivel.

"I'll buy a drink for the boys," Morgan said, "then I must go." He shoved his chips to Cleve, who swiftly verified the count and paid for them, and rose from his chair.

Jones had had enough of that game. It wasn't cards that won there. It wasn't luck. It was something else, the same something that won in every other game. Even the play of these men was a trial of strength and nerve, like joisting on a field of honor. As Morgan rose, Jones also quitted his chair, thrusting the remainder of his money into his pocket. He wanted to get out of sight.

But Morgan took him by the arm and led him to the bar.

"That was pretty raw stuff on my part, lad. Rum poker. Wouldn't the laugh have been on me, though, if you really had had a third king? You'll learn. Name your poison. Step up, you rum hounds, this one is on Buck Morgan."

Morgan set down his glass.

"Working?"

Strangling with the neat whiskey he had swallowed, it was a moment before Jones could answer.

"No."

"Want a job?"

"Yes."

"All right. Elda Fina shaft at eight in the morning. Miner?"

"No. But I can muck."

"Good enough. Six for muckers, seven for miners is what I'm paying. See you tomorrow."

Jones, outsider that he was, had not heard that Morgan was having a bit of labor trouble. The three shifts working in the Elda Fina incline shaft had struck in a body, demanding more money, giving as reason the hazard of the work. The ground was blocky with mud slips between the blocks, continually threatening to cave. Jones did not know much of the significance of strikes. The next morning at a quarter to eight he had climbed the hill to the workings.

He got a hint of the trouble from his shift partner.

"Jim Burgan and the rest of the gang will be sore as goats at us for this. They'll figger we're scabbin'. But I thought it over and I can't see it that way. The camp ain't organized. Even if it was, Morgan is payin' over the reg'lar scale, so they didn't have no kick coming. If they didn't want to work, that's their business. What do you think?"

Jones, who through lack of experience was worth nothing as an arbiter, agreed.

They entered the skip a little later and were lowered into the block hole which sloped at a forty-five degree angle into the mountain. There they soon learned the difficulty under which the work had been going forward. The ground was treacherous, and a high order of mining skill was required. The machine man with Jones was incompetent, and throughout the shift he spent most of his time adjusting the automatic drilling machine or loosening stuck drills. He had the holes down less than a third of the required distance when time came to shoot them.

Enough powder for deep holes was sent

down. Tamped into the shallow ones it filled them nearly to the surface. In his ignorance the machine man thought he was merely wasting powder, but the damage didn't end there. They split the fuses, rode to the surface and went down to camp. That was at four P.M.

At seven Morgan found Jones at the Waldorf. The manager was unequivocally angry.

"Say!" he roared. "What were you high-binders trying to do up there today? Blow up the mine?"

"W-what's the matter?"

"Matter! You knocked out two sets of timbers and caved the mountain through the hanging wall, that's what's the matter! You get your time from the office, and if ever you show up around that shaft again——"

That was injustice, which Morgan himself in a calmer moment would have admitted. Jones had not been the miner on that shift. But he had not the heart to argue the point.

And a few minutes later he had something of greater immediate importance to consider. Two men came into the saloon bearing between them another who was limp as a corpse. Jones saw the face, a shapeless mass of blood. He recognized the clothes. It was the man with whom he had worked that day, who had overloaded the holes and had been fired.

He heard men talking. This was the work of Burgan, one of the self-styled strikers.

"Burgan says he's goin' to get you, too," somebody told Jones. "That looks like he means it. He's full of likker and there's blood in his eye. If I was you, I'd either heel myself or duck. He's plumb mean when he gets started."

Jones, who had never defended himself with a weapon or without, would have "ducked" then and there had he known where to go. But he hesitated fatally, afraid to leave the lights of the saloon. Then the door, which he was watching with haggard eyes, opened, and Joe Merrill walked in.

AT SIGHT of that familiar, confident face, and for no logical reason, a wave of relief swept him. He went up to the teamster, and Merrill, smiling warmly, put out his hand.

"How's tricks?" he asked. "I've been sort of looking for you. Mack, my swamper, quit me today. Thinks with all these opportunities for makin' money fast floatin' around, he can't afford to waste his time for five bucks a day. How about you? Want his place?"

Jones was in a mood just then to pay Merrill five dollars a day for the privilege of being near him.

"Yes," he managed to say. "Sure. You bet. Let's have a drink, Joe." He took the place farthest from the door.

They were at the bar when Burgan came in, a huge miner with a truculent air normally, now half drunk. His eyes swept the room and rested upon Jones. He came straight across, elbowing men out of his way.

"You're my meat," he stated briefly.

Merrill did not look toward Jones. He turned slowly, leaned languidly with elbows on the bar.

"What's the big idea, Burgan?"

"You ain't in on this. I want that guy. He's helpin' to bust the strike."

"I never heard of no strike. There ain't no organization in camp, an' Morgan is payin' the scale, or better, anyhow. A bunch of you fellows quit, that's all. Where do you get that strike stuff? Come on, have a drink and forget it."

Burgan was glaring past him at Jones. He took a step forward. Merrill moved also, putting himself between. He was smiling all over his face without a trace of anger.

Jones had never been championed before. Even in that moment of fear he wondered what Merrill's motive could possibly be. No one had ever substituted for him in times of stress. He had never seen the Golden Rule applied. For him, outside the Book, it had not existed. Not until then did he learn that some men practised it without preaching.

"Come off, Burgan," Merrill was saying. "You ain't sore about that. I know you. You're sore because the Elda Fina didn't show no highgrade. You'd have to break your back to pack off enough rock to buy a drink."

Bystanders laughed.

"You ain't in on this, Merrill." Burgan's belligerency did not abate. "Git out of the way while I mop up the floor with that stiff."

His huge hands were opening and closing suggestively.

"I'm in, all right. You can see me. This lad is workin' for me, wrasslin' horses. He ain't got your job. Do you want to drink, or no? If you ain't thirsty, don't bother us thisaway."

"I know you're poison, all right, Merrill," Burgan turned all his attention to the teamster, "an' I don't figger on goin' up ag'inst your gun. I ain't no gun man, but I'm a bear cat with my fists."

"So I've heard." Merrill laughed outright. "Better take care of 'em and quit takin' chances promiscuous. For the last time I say, do you want to drink with us?"

"No!" the miner blazed. "To —— with you!"

"Oh, very well. If you must, you must." Merrill sighed and straightened up.

He unbelted his gun and handed it to Jones. He stripped off his coat.

"You can have it any way you like."

He stepped out from the bar, moving with the easy grace of a cat. He was thirty pounds lighter than Burgan, but his lithe body sloped wedge-shaped from shoulders to feet, his head was firmly poised on a muscular neck. The two did not seem unevenly matched.

Men cleared a space expectantly. Others tried to crowd in at the door.

Burgan stood with arms spread, stooping forward like a bear.

"All right, let's go," Merrill said, and struck with devastating speed, a straight left thrust backed by all his weight.

The blow was directed to the body, and Burgan half blocked it, but he took the right hook that followed by the tenth of a second flush on the jaw. And he took twenty blows during the succeeding minute on head and body that kept him dazed and blinded and finally sent him crashing to the floor.

That was really all there was to the fight. Burgan got up twice and went down again. Then he couldn't get up.

Merrill turned, took out a white handkerchief and wiped some red stains from his hands. Quick breathing and a slight flush were the only perceptible changes in him. He buckled on the gun and slid into his coat.

"Did we get that drink? I've forgot. If not, let's have it and go to bed. This ain't no celebration, and four o'clock in the morning comes early when there's work to do."

So Jones went to work for Merrill. He ate and drank with Merrill, and told him things he had never confided to any one before. The succeeding weeks were the best life had ever given him. While near his friend some of the calmness and self-assurance were projected over him. He borrowed courage. He also learned that Merrill was no cold personification of infallibility, but was merely a young man, splendidly endowed, warmly human, whose greatest fault was his reckless prodigality of himself.

As for Merrill, he seemed actually to like the frail youth. Jones vainly wondered why, then unable to solve the problem he gave it up and contented himself with being merely glad that it was so.

As a skinner's swamper he more than earned his wages. Merrill often remarked to friends that the lad was the best help he had ever found.

"He'll take better care of the stock than I will; and they'll work for him, too."

He spent long hours of evenings, by lantern light as the days shortened, brushing dusty coats until they shone. He studied each horse as an individual. He noted and remedied the slightest indisposition. He quickly learned to use the jerk line, and often relieved Merrill on the long trips.

Merrill came to have more and more confidence in his helper as regards the team, and turned more responsibility over to him. Which, if good for Jones, wasn't good for Merrill. A load of responsibility helps keep a man straight. Sure of the welfare of his stock, he had more time for drinking, and he drank more than had been his wont. He had more time to gamble, and he bucked the games.

As the weeks ran away, Jones saw the mushroom growth of the camp. The output of highgrade continued, the influx of men did not abate. Merrill hauled in piecemeal a great twenty-four stamp mill for the Rusty Pick, innumerable heavy pieces of steel. He hauled hundreds of thousands of feet of lumber. He specialized in big contracts. Hay-wire outfits like those of "Gyppo" Wilson and old Tom Watson—whose ragged mackinaw was held together by five-inch horse-blanket pins in lieu of buttons—might handle the various small orders.

Some of the camp's new strikes petered out; others made good, such as Reber's, which Jones had discovered. The ore

gradually increased in value with depth until at forty feet below the surface it assayed five dollars a ton in gold with a trace of silver. Then he sold the property to the Rusty Pick for a price rumored to be twelve thousand in cash and a small per cent. of stock in the company. After that he went about camp enjoying his well-earned leisure, drank heavily, was villainously morose and over talkative by turns. Jones studiously avoided him.

MERRILL'S outfit pulled into camp one day near noon with ten thousand feet of lumber. They had put away the horses, removed some marks of the road and eaten dinner.

"I feel like layin' off this afternoon," Merrill said. "We'll go over to the Waldorf and see if we can find a man to help you unload them boards."

Reber was in the saloon when they entered.

"There's my old partner," he exclaimed, coming down upon Jones. "I ain't had a chance to buy you a drink since I sold. I figger you've got one comin', though you couldn't see enough in the prospect to hang on."

Jones wanted to spurn the proffered hand. But he took it.

"Name it, gents."

Merrill took whisky. Jones said he believed he'd have some lemonade. Didn't like to drink so soon after eating.

"Whatever you say goes," said Reber magnanimously. "But I feel it my duty to warn you ag'inst the evil effect of sugar in big quantities. I knowed a man once that went plumb to the bad from drinkin' rock an' rye an' rum an' gum. The sugar rotted out his intestional track an' he nearly died. Lemonade will do the same thing. It don't do fer a man to abuse himself with sugar."

"Well, here's lookin' at you," said Jones, who wanted to get away.

"Here's hopin' you don't lose no more bets," Reber pledged. And they drank.

Then Merrill shoved out a twenty dollar bill. They drank, and drank again. Jones was forced to forsake the lemonades, their innocuous quantity forbidding too frequent repetition. Merrill took neat whisky, filling up his glass.

"Now what do you say we find somebody to help me unload that lumber?" Jones proposed after a time.

"We'll have one more drink," said Merrill, "then you go and find him. I feel real devilish this afternoon, and all wore out. I'm goin' to lay off."

While the drink was being served, Gyppo Wilson pulled up before the saloon with his eight faltering crowbaits and four and a half tons of freight. He left the team standing in the street and came in for a drink, "to cut the alkali out of his gullet," his heavy shot-whip coiled around his neck. Considering the fact Gyppo Wilson never stopped with one drink, this was unpardonable neglect of his horses. Wilson did many unpardonable things.

He stayed half an hour drinking and chinning with cronies while his spiritless horses drooped in their harness. Then he went out and climbed into the saddle.

He jerked savagely on his line and let out a stream of profanity. The leaders and the wheel team started half heartedly. The rest stood still.

Wilson erupted more and louder profanity. Then the other teams started, stepping into the slack stretchers of those in front. He leaped to the ground in a rage and ran alongside the team, jerking bridles and swinging a heavy boot to ribs. Then he went back and climbed again into his saddle.

The horses were now all awake, and when he called out, seven of the eight started. The eighth, a sore-shouldered creature midway of the string, decided by some process of his brute mind that it wasn't worth the candle, and chose that moment to rebel. When the others were starting, he lunged back, throwing his mate and the team behind him into confusion.

There were more facetious remarks from the augmenting body of onlookers.

Gyppo Wilson swung to the ground again, ominously quiet, the beast in his eyes. He took the shot-whip from his neck as he walked up the line. Abreast of the recalcitrant horse and ten feet distant he threw the lash. He was a master with a blacksnake.

The whip cracked like a pistol. Blood came out on the lean hips and flanks of the animal. Seven horses danced in their tracks in stark terror. One, who for a reason unknowable had determined to endure the torture to the death rather than pull, stood still, barely flinching when the lash went home. He had balked, "balked right."

Soon after the whipping commenced, an argument of moment began at the door of the Waldorf. Joe Merrill had poured seven or eight full glasses of whisky down his throat. Old Reber since morning had drunk an incalculable amount. There was a spectacle of gross brutality before their eyes. Whisky and the sight of blood and torture are calculated to arouse passion.

"The —— fool has got 'em over-loaded," said Reber.

"Eighty-five or ninety-hundred," said Merrill. "Over-loaded, ——. He ain't got no horses. Don't deserve any. I can start that wagon with one horse out of my string, one single, solitary horse. There ain't no limit to the strength of a horse if he's in good condition and willin' to try. He can move anything that's loose at both ends."

"You say you've got horses that can start that wagon alone, by theirselves?"

"That's what I said. "

"I'll just naturally bet you a hundred iron men you ain't."

"I wouldn't pull a horse like that for a measley hundred dollars."

"Then anything you say—a thousand, five thousand. I think you're just makin' a noise when you say you can do it."

Merrill had not expected a turn like this when he made the statement, but he was in exactly the right mood to accept it. He had seen marvelous performances by his gray horse, Ned. He knew the animal was utterly faithful. In the moment before he answered he had a vision of the beautiful horse, the sleek, powerful, prideful body. And Ned knew exactly how to start a load—legs braced and belly close to the ground, an irresistible forward thrust.

"Makin' a noise, eh? How much did you say? Ten thousand?"

"I reckon I can raise that much. It's a shame to take your money."

"You heard that?" Merrill appealed to some bystanders. A dozen men nodded eager affirmation. "All right, remember it. I'm goin' to stop that beating out there. It's gettin' my goat. A man with no more brains than to whip a horse in the harness ought to be in a straight-jacket."

He ran into the street.

The beating had been going on for minutes. Wilson, his face contorted with passion, was throwing the lash with slow terrible deliberation. The horse standing with drooping head and flattened ears and quivering bloody flank was being literally cut to death. Though there were grumblings in the crowd, no one had as yet interfered. It is not good form to tell a hungry man when he has eaten enough nor an angry one when he should cease lashing his own horse.

"Cut it out, Gyppo," Merrill said. "Leave your wagon here and put up your team. There's a little bet on. We'll pull the load out later."

The maniac with the whip made no sign that he had heard. As he drew back his arm, Merrill leaped in. He struck once, a smashing upward-driven blow, and Wilson started to fall; and his fists smashed upon the falling man twice more before he reached the ground.

"Tell him who done it when he wakes up," Merrill said, and walked back to the Waldorf.

NEWS of the bet was passing rapidly through the camp. Men crowded around the pair while the money was being posted and stakeholders and judges selected. Others, unable to get within seeing distance of the chief participants, evinced their interest by dragging Wilson out of the road. They quickly unhitched the team and drove it away. They unhooked the long lead chain, clearing the ground for the test.

As Merrill walked into the street he found Jones at his side. The youth could not borrow enough calmness in this crisis. He wasb eing shaken by a nervous chill. He had thrust his clenched fists to the bottom of his pockets, striving to get a grip upon himself.

"Go down and harness Ned, Claud," Merrill told him quietly. "He's goin' to pay for my layoff this afternoon."

Jones raised a twitching face.

"I don't think Ned can do it, Joe," he whispered.

"Are you layin' down on me in a pinch, Claud?"

"No. By cracky, Joe, you know I wouldn't!"

"Then hop down there and get old Ned. Tell him not to lay down on me, either. We've got to do our —— today, or we quit eatin'."

By the time Jones returned with the gray horse a horde of men were in the street, banked in a dense ring around the wagon.

The horse was not fat nor yet lean, but in perfect working condition. The fruit of Jones' brush was in evidence. The dapples on the gray coat glinted in the sun. Compared with Wilson's horses, Ned was a proud knight among cringing serfs.

As Jones turned the horse at the end of the wagon tongue, he was the center of a thousand pairs of eyes, and there was an electric potency in the massed gaze that he could feel. With trembling hands he clevised the swingletree to the end of the tongue and moved back.

Merrill came coolly forward. He patted the horse's sleek hips.

"Ned," he said, stepping back.

The animal moved forward slowly until the traces tightened, then flattened out, all his legs braced, toe calks sinking into the ground.

"Now, Ned!"

The horse did not move a foot, but his powerful body tensed in a formidable effort. Nearer and nearer the earth he settled, muscles standing out in ridges. And there he hung for long seconds. No horseman in the crowd but knew he was making a perfect exhibition of pulling.

"Whoa," Merrill said quietly. "Ease off, boy."

Jones let out his pent breath in a gasp that was almost a sob.

The horse straightened up, slacking the traces. The muscles along his legs were jerking. Sweat showed on flanks and shoulders.

Old Watson, with the horse-blanket pins in his ragged coat, came to Merrill's side.

"He cain't do it, Joe. It's a shame to pull him that away. He shore tried, but he cain't do it."

Merrill turned upon him, his mouth smiling, eyes blazing.

"How do you know, Tom?" he asked.

Watson went back to the edge of the crowd shaking his head.

Merrill stood at the horse's side, running his hand caressingly over the silky hair, talking in a low voice.

"Now, Ned," he said, moving back, "let's try it again."

The horse unhesitatingly tightened the chains.

"Gee!" the driver voice rang out sharply.

The beast swung to the right, crouched, and thrust forward relentlessly with the traces tight as violin strings. And there he hung as if pulling against a cathedral.

"Ned!" Merrill's voice cracked out suddenly. "—— you, pull!"

As if galvanized by the will of the man, the horse commanded his straining muscles to a further effort, an effort beyond physical power. Laboring thus, he uttered a long groan, and still leaning against the chains suddenly sank, relaxed, and rolled upon his side.

Merrill stood looking at the dying horse, stunned. He did not move nor speak even when movement started in the crowd.

After a decent interval the judges approached. It was time to wind up the episode.

"Guess Reber wins it, Joe," said Morgan. "Hard luck."

Merrill's eyes traveled from one to the other and back to the horse. He said nothing.

Jones came pushing through to where his friend stood.

"Wait a minute, Joe," he began rapidly. "Joe the bet was like this: You bet one of your horses could start the wagon alone. You didn't name no certain horse. You can try another one, can't you?"

Merrill looked at him as if not comprehending his words. It was the first time Jones had ever seen him knocked from his equilibrium.

"It looks to me like it's over with," said Reber. "He had a fair trial, the whole road to himself. He lost, so le's settle up an' go peddle our papers."

Jones caught Merrill's arm with both hands.

"Wake up, Joe. I can take one of the string and pull that wagon. Wake up! Ain't I right, Mr. Morgan?" he besought the judge. "Ain't I right? He said he had a horse that could pull the wagon alone. Ain't that right?"

"Well, sir," Morgan said slowly, "I believe that's right. I suppose, according to the terms, he can pull every horse in his string one after the other. But he used the best one he had, the only one he or anybody else thought had a chance. I doubt if he's got any more that will pull against a tree till he breaks his heart."

Merrill started at that. His eyes, full of grief, went round the circle of faces. He turned again to the horse.

"I'm a —— fool, Ned," he whispered. "But how was I to know you'd hurt yourself on that load?"

"But," Morgan continued, "as I see it, it's up to Joe. What do you think, Bill?"

The other judge agreed.

"There ain't no use keepin' us here all day," Reber protested. "He ain't got no horse than can pull the wagon—proved that hisself. Better leave the rest of 'em to freight with."

Merrill shook his head as if to clear it after a stunning blow. When he spoke it was with a resumption of something like his usual manner.

"I don't know what you're up to, Claud, but if you've got any aces up your sleeve, now's the time to play 'em."

Jones went to the barn at a run, returning shortly with a team with which to drag away the dead animal. A dozen men offered to take this task off his hands.

"Fetch the next superhorse, Jones," Morgan told him. "We'll have a clear field for you to work in when you get back."

As he started through the crowd he had a glimpse of Reber coming behind him. There was the same look in the eyes Jones had seen the day of the mishap in the prospect hole. The long scar across his forehead was vivid. Jones did not look back again, but as he pushed through the dense throng he was sensible of the pursuit, Reber hanging at his heels like a Nemesis. His impeded progress with the old man following associated itself in his mind with the impotent striving to escape the horror of a nightmare. At the fringe of the crowd he felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder, and he turned, perforce, his soul shrinking.

"I don't know what you're pullin' off," Reber said, scowling ferociously, "but if you want to live to be a good old man, don't jimmy me into losing. You won't live thirty minutes if you do drag that wagon."

According to Reber's reputation he was fully capable of cold-blooded murder. Judging by the look in his eyes, his words were no idle threat.

Jones' face went chalky under the tan.

"I'm tellin' you, you wont live thirty minutes," Reber repeated. "An' you know I mean it!"

He turned back into the crowd.

THE goal of the normal man's ambition is to achieve, to conquer in a crisis with the eyes of brave and capable men upon him. The apex of opportunity is a situation wherein skill, strength and courage are the requisites of success. To win is proof of manhood, and the palm of success is the acclaim of those understanding the effort involved.

This opportunity was Jones'—but with Reber's threat upon it like a wet blanket over a bright flame.

Hounded by fear that held all the horror of annihilation of one afraid to die, he went on toward the stable. Each step involved a distinct act of will. He went shaking, stumbling, as if the organization of his body was disrupted. Coming into view of the stable, he broke into a shambling run.

He ran through the door into the alley behind the long line of horses. Before him stood the great brown, Jack, his choice of all Merrill's string for power. He could see through the window over the manger the cluttered shacks and tents on the cañon wall. That side of camp was almost deserted. All the men not at work in the mines were down in the street waiting for him to return and make good his word, or fail honestly.

He started, his legs moving like automatons. As he swung upon the manger sill he felt a quick uprush of hope. Beyond that window was the wide world, full of strangers who would never hear of his betrayal of Joe Merrill. He could escape.

And then in a white vision he saw life, its meaning, life as just a series of dangers, of battles to be fought, obstaces to be surmounted, limited only by a man's alloted span of years. To joy in life is to welcome the struggle. He who shuns the battle never lives, but moves feebly through a living death. There is no escape.

Fear was prompting him to run from life itself and face an alternative worse than death. Joe Merrill, who was his only real friend, now needed his help. If he quit, "laid down," he knew he could never escape the shame in his own heart. In the deepest solitude of earth he would stand self-convicted, without means of finding peace. He knew what was hell to a damned soul.

He slid slowly back into the stable and stood numbly at the head of the brown horse.

"I'm afraid, Jack," he whispered the confession. "I'm afraid. But I've *got* to go through. I can't run away no more. I'm goin' through!"

He clenched his hands and closed his eyes, summonging all his will to stop the abandoned jumping in his muscles. And in that moment to his racked soul came the lightning bolt of experience for which men, who find themselves too weak for the task alloted them, pray the Creator on humble knees. Fear left him at a stroke. Peace like a cool, incoming wave flowed over him.

The solution was so simple. Do his own work, live up to his own ideal, that's all he had to do. What did the rest matter? What did anything matter except the calmness, the peace that he had found?

In a quiet exultation he grasped the horse's sensitive muzzle in his two hands.

"Jack, big horse," he whispered, "we'll do it! You'll pull the wagon for me. I've never done nothin' right in all my life, but I'll do this. I ain't worth a dad-burned red cent, nohow, so I'll just do it up brown once before I go."

Ten minutes later he drove the brown horse down toward the buzzing crowd. As he went he flicked the end of a line and chanted:

"Oh, say we're afloat or ashore boys,
Oh, say we're afloat or ashore;
We'll never come back any more, boys,
We'll never come back any more."

"Here he comes," somebody said in an awed voice, "happy as a fifteen-year-ol' gal dressed up an' headed fer church, with a balky horse to pull Wilson's wagon."

"Goin' to pull that load with a balky horse!" another exclaimed. "I've heered Merrill exhaust all the English language and all the cuss words he knowed in Mexican on that critter."

"Pull the load with that horse, Jones, and we'll declare a holiday in camp."

The comments and joking died away as the youth swung the horse into place and hitched the traces. He went over the harness, adjusting straps, carefully setting the collar into place. He seemed quite oblivious to his surroundings. When he left the horse's head and picked up the reins, a vast stillness settled over the crowd.

He took up the slack in the reins and chirruped as do boys on farms, but which long-line skinners never do. The horse stepped against the traces.

"Now, Jack."

His voice was not threatening. Rather the tone requested a friend for a service of love.

He braced his feet as the horse flattened out, and hauled back upon the reins with all his strength.

"Jack!"

The great beast with the snaffle in his teeth hurled himself against the chains, shod hoofs tearing into the earth. He was not the skilful puller Ned had been, but he did his best with all his tremendous strength. The crowd, holding its breath, saw the wagon yield, the wheels start rolling! The brown horse lunged forward, the huge load following through the dust.

As the close-banked mass of men roared its acclaim, Jones stopped the horse, dropped the reins and ran to where Reber stood.

"I done it!" he cried in a high, shrill voice. "I done it! You said I wouldn't live thirty minutes if I pulled that wagon. I done it! Now kill me, you dad-burned ol' scamp!"

Men who had seen killings and who sensed a deeper undercurrent of meaning in the drama, instinctively stepped out of range.

But Reber made no move, standing tense with folded arms, a look of indescribable malignancy on his face. His eyes went past Jones, who glanced over his own shoulder following the direction of the gaze.

Behind him, a little to one side, stood Merrill, the skirt of his leather jacket pushed back, his right hand resting on his hip three inches from the butt of his belted gun. His eyes were cold as blue steel, his mouth wreathed in that fighting smile.

For a long, long minute the battle of eyes continued. Men jostled uneasily from both segments of the line, leaving the three in an open lane reaching from side to side of the street. Then Reber's gaze fell. He relaxed, turned away. As quickly as that Jones saw his potent enemy transformed into a broken old man, inviting more of pity than of hate.

Merrill and Jones became the center of a jubilant throng.

"You're a whiz with horses, Jones," somebody said admiringly. "I've got to hand it to you. You stood the crowd on its ear. They didn't think you had it in you. You had your nerve callin' old Reber the way you did, but it was an awful chance to take. I believe he'd 'a' drilled you if Joe hadn't been on the job."

Merrill, a chastened Merrill, but still smiling, held out his hand simply.

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THE best way of breaking horses—a talk from one of our Station Keepers who has certainly had experience. Incidentally it looks as if a long sea voyage would do the trick—only sea voyages aren't always handy.

Provo, Utah.

"Camp-Fire" brings up a subject on which I put myself up as an expert (no flowers) and that is about breaking horses.

IN THE first place Bill Gianella is absolutely right and he sure gives the right dope about riding a horse.

Now just what are the gain and loss from breaking a horse by physical force as opposed to gentle means? It depends absolutely on the horse. I've probably broken or at least tamed between 2,000 and 3,000 head of horses and from my experience I will state positively that horses have the same characteristics as human beings and have to be handled accordingly. In the main gentleness is the most satisfactory method, but when you get one of those brutes with a large Roman nose and both eyes come out of one hole, better lead him out and kill him. That's the safest method. Given time, I believe I can break or gentle a horse about as well as most people can do.

IN THE old days a cowpuncher or twister usually got $5 a head for breaking horses. About all he did was to ride a horse three or four times until he was bridlewise (that is, until he could be turned by means of the bridle), then the horse was turned over to some cowpuncher and it then depended on the puncher whether the horse was ever broken or not.

I broke or at least rode several hundred horses that were sold to the British Government and shipped to South Africa to the Boer War and just so I could ride a horse out about 100 yards and get him back was all that was necessary. They did not even have to be halter-broke (broken to lead) and it did not make any difference how much they bucked. The requirements were a full mouth (erroneous because they called a five-year-old a full mouth and they do not have a full mouth (upper tusks) until six), four and one half hands high, and sound.

I rode and sold to John Monglinyer in Hyattville, Wyoming, a roan mare belonging to Reynol Ziesman,

known to be 14 years old, same mare having killed three men. She did nothing but buck. I'll tell the world I did some riding too.

I talked to one of the British officers at Sheridan, Wyoming, where they bought the horses for British Government and he told me that the sea voyage took the pep out of them and that out of 5,000 head that went to S. A. only one horse had guts enough left to buck.

NOW if I were going to break a horse for myself, I'd sell myself to him—that is, I'd gain his confidence if it took six months and I would certainly use the gentle method. Of course, I would have to pick my horse. What I wish to convey is that a horse with a good disposition can best be handled by gentle means, while one of a mean disposition has to be handled rough and said horse is only broken by and for the man who can conquer him and would never be safe for every one.

I had the very great pleasure of meeting Frank C. Robertson in Salt Lake City this month and found him to be a darn nice fellow and I hope we are friends. I can state that he has the manner of the real westerner.

WELL, I'm out on the road now—left Salt Lake April 10th and will be out until September. I am enclosing a few snap-shots we took last year. Same outfit this year. I will make Utah north to Ogden from here, then east through Wyoming to Saranac City, then south to Boulder, Colorado, my home. It might help get some more members also. You can write to George B. McClellan, Worland, Wyo., or B. F. Wickwire, Basin, Wyoming, former sheriff Big Horn County, and ask them if I know anything about breaking horses, as I broke for both of them. I can give you 30 or 40 other names if you wish. The cook says come and get it, so I will ring off for now with best wishes to Camp-Fire.—FRANK EARNEST.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Warren Elliot Carleton rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. Mr. Carleton is now trebly of the *Adventure* family—not only reader and member of the writers' brigade, but a former member of our editorial staff.

Brooklyn, New York.

Swordfishing on Georges Bank is, to my way of thinking, the most exciting of all commercial fishing. I've been on all kinds of fishing trips with the Massachusetts fishermen—cod hauling, mackerel seining, lobstering, etc.—but never have I put in three more satisfying weeks than those I spent with Captain Bob Jackson of Edgartown, Massachusetts, in the swordfishing schooner *Hazel M. Jackson*, in June two years ago. Seasick? You bet! I've known old hands who keeled over in that Georges ground-swell. Unless you've been there, you have no idea what it is like. It seems as if Nature has dumped about everything disagreeable in the waters north of Nantucket Lightship—fierce storms, tide rips that are veritable waterspouts, sharks of every variety, and fog, that shrouds the water for weeks at a time. But it is wonderful there in pleasant weather.

I'VE been called on deck with the rest of the crew two and three times a night to listen to an ocean liner whistling somewhere in the thick weather and sounding closer and closer each time. Some liners came so close that we could hear voices on their decks. We had one very close call from being run down by a liner that was not whistling at all. Those are the fellows the fishermen fear. There have been several schooners run down in the past few years; I know of one three years ago that was lost with all hands. Most of the fishing is done in the Transatlantic shipping lanes, which the swordfish seem to frequent.

Swordfish are formidable antagonists, and their fights against the men in dories hauling them are thrilling, indeed. Dories are frequently "punched" by their long swords, and this is how a number of fishermen have lost their lives. Sometimes they jab their swords through the schooner itself. The *Mildred J*, a schooner of Edgartown, still has a sword in her bottom that went through fourteen inches of wood, then punctured the water-tank, and broke off, as most swords do. A swordfish, however, is usually a coward, seeming to conserve his sword rather than forcing the issue with his captor.

THE log I kept of that trip with Captain Bob would fill a good part of Camp-Fire. It would tell you about a school of basking sharks, the biggest of which Captain Bob harpooned—a giant well over forty feet long. About a swordfish we caught that had swallowed a loaf of bread, and another a black snake. About running through Muskeget Channel in a fog, with foghorns of haddock fishermen tooting on all sides, and we anxiously dodging in and out past shadowy bowsprits and dimly lighted sterns of anchored schooners.

But I think I've spoken my little piece. I merely wish to emphasize swordfishing as the top-notcher of all the adventuring I've ever done. And that includes camping, hunting and fishing in the Tennessee mountains, New Hampshire and Maine, considerable seafaring, and tooting a cornet—the last-mentioned has been responsible for getting me into some adventures far stranger than fiction.

I'd like to hear from some of you who have shared tobacco with me, and whose trails have branched off from mine during the past ten years. I'm still called "Doc," even by Mrs. Carleton; so I think I may use that handle in introducing myself at the Camp-Fire.—WARREN ELLIOT CARLETON.

SOME interesting facts about *jujutsu*, from the one woman member of our "AA" staff:

Castine, Maine.

In November 10th issue I note a letter from A. H. Phelps with reference to *jujitsu*. The interest of Camp-Fire readers in Japan seems to center about three things: *jujitsu*, paying jobs, bear hunting in the Ainu country. This being the case, it occurs to me that a further exposition of *jujitsu* might be of use, though I am not in position to tackle the subject technically in comparison with the defensive art in this country, as does Mr. Phelps in his most excellent brief statement.

TO BEGIN with, *jujitsu* (I use Prof. Kano's spelling in his publicity work for his school) must not be confused with Japanese wrestling; a mistake which, I believe, is frequently made.

Wrestling, as practised by the Japanese, is a very ancient sport—some authorities claim the first bout took place in 23 B. C. It may be called the national game of Japan and is popular amongst all classes of society. It is also practised as a pastime amongst all classes. It is a common province experience—in the cities there is more variety of diversion for youngsters—to see small boys strutting and wrestling in imitation of professionals, whom they may have seen pictured in the press or may have been taken to see perform, as a rare treat, upon some holiday. The champion wrestler in Japan has been, and is, about the parallel in public esteem with the bull-fighter of Spain or the ball hero of America.

THESE professionals and champions are gross, beefy individuals of enormous weight, strength and appetite—trained up to it from early life, under the patronage of some retired professional. Toyko has of late years been headquarters for the game and between two and three hundred professionals are usually congregated there. These are divided, for convenience of contest, into eastern and western "camps"—originally representing eastern and western provinces—and are classified into nine grades, according to proficiency, with but ten men in each of the three upper grades—as I understand it. In Tokyo grand matches have been given, since 1828, in January and in May, lasting ten days. Men of equal grade in rival camps are pitted against each other. A wrestler must lay out three men before he gains a championship in his grade and becomes proficient to grade higher or to carry off topnotch honors. After these semiannual city contests, the champions go on tour to the provinces.

A WRESTLER'S ASSOCIATION is the promoter of these matches. This is made up of retired champions, limited to eighty, wrestlers of higher grade in active service, and umpires. A man gets the equivalent of about $15 to $25, only, for participation in these semiannual matches; but certain upper grades share in the gate receipts and make something on tour. All wrestlers receive innumerable and sometimes valuable gifts from patrons. If, in a moment of excitement, an enthusiast throws some personal property into the ring to a favorite performer, it is afterward redeemed for money.

TRADITIONAL wrestling tricks number forty-eight, based twelve each upon *throwing, entangling, twisting, uplifting*. In actual practise there are, however, some two hundred, it is said, different tricks and dodges.

These wrestlers are the only professional athletes in Japan, and are peculiar to, as well as sacred to, Japan. They have no athletic counterparts in any other country with whom to compete. In America or Europe a 300-400 pound fat man is not, ordinarily, much of a wrestler.

NOW for *jujitsu:* wrestling is to this about what house painting is to landscape or portrait painting: it is more an "accomplishment" of Japanese gentlemen. Some teachers of what might be called *elementary jujitsu* dig up records somewhere to the effect that it was brought into Japan in the 16th Century, by a very learned Japanese physicist who, during a student sojourn in China, learned some tricks of a Confucian game where *striking* and *kicking* were used to disable an opponent. With these as a foundation, upon his return to Japan he went into retirement and finally worked out a sysytem of several hundred tricks combining his Confucian game with observations of the pliancy of the willow tree. This early system was developed, by additions, deletions and modifications, until a science of self-defense was evolved—*jujitsu*.

One of the earliest schools for teaching this science was called "Spirit of the Willow-Tree School."

In Japan's feudal days—ending in 1868—*jujitsu* was a part of the education of the *samurai*—gentlemen warriors.

Dr. Nitobe, one of Japan's greatest English scholars, says: "*Jujutsu* may be briefly defined as an application of anatomical knowledge to the purpose of offense or defense. It differs from wrestling in that it does not depend upon muscular strength. It differs from other forms of attack in that it uses no weapons. Its feat consists in *clutching* or *striking* such part of the enemy's body as will make him numb and incapable of resistance. Its object is not to kill, but to incapacitate one for action for the time being." This is Dr. Nitobe's statement of the science as applied to the instruction of the *samurai*.

WITH fedualism *jujitsu* and many other medieval things faded away. About 1882 Prof. Jigoro Kano, an eminent educator, revived the science as a system of physical culture and began to teach it to the young Japanese and gradually popularized it under the name *judo*—principle or doctrine of pliancy—by this name it is known in Japan. It is said that Prof. Kano also has developed it to an extent unknown even in feudal days; but the system or science, as ordinarily taught, is merely physical culture. The greatest secrets are still secrets, and have been handed down from teacher to teacher through successive generations and there are, undoubtedly, esoteric secrets in the teaching.

Also without doubt a very thorough knowledge of the human anatomy is necessary for the mastery of all the tricks of this science. The high secrets are imparted only to those of highest moral principles and integrity, to guard against their abuse.

IN PROF. KANO'S school there are six classes of "undergraduates" and ten grades of "graduates." I understand that most pupils take only the undergraduate classes, which are practically only physical culture; though the knowledge gained gives a small person the advantage over a heavier weight who knows nothing of the science.

Not until the *sixth* grade of graduates is reached is a student considered to be possessed of any comprehensive knowledge of the physical side of this art or science—whichever one may want to call it. The *tenth* grade turns out master teachers, or *shihan;* but very few attain this grade. Many call themselves *shihan* who are not. Even beyond this grade are esoteric secrets possessed by very few.

In 1920 the highest grade, open to all, acquired by any foreigner in the Kano school—reported by "Terry's Guide"—was the graduate first grade and was held by but four men, two of whom lived in Tokyo.

THESE facts will show not only that few are wandering promiscuously about who are superproficient in the art, but that those possessed of the real knowledge of *jujitsu* are men who would not be

seeking competitive bouts. As Mr. Phelps says: "No man really well versed in the original *jujitsu* could be ever induced to appear in a public exhibition."

The advanced "tricks" of this much discussed and much misunderstood science produce disablement, unconsciousness, apparent death with counter tricks of resuscitation, or death. It would be dangerous to teach them to everybody.

As taught by Prof. Kano, in open classes, *jujitsu* imparts normal self-defense knowledge, self-discipline, mental poise, and gives one a greater control over the muscles of the body than other systems of physical culture. I think this is all he claims for ordinary class instruction.

BOOKS upon the subject probably do not take up the secret or esoteric part of it—which undoubtedly does exist not only in Japan, but in India.

The books I have listed in my card catalogue are:

"Japanese Physical Training"—H. Irving Hancock.

"The Complete Kano Jui-Jitsu."

"Japanese Physical Culture"—M. Ohashi.

"Jui-jitsu Tricks"—K. Saito.

These may be obtained through BRENTANO'S, New York, or through ORIENTALIA, 32 West 58th St., New York. This is doubtless an incomplete list.—(MRS.) GRACE P. T. KNUDSON.

LEST any of you should be fooled at your own expense when you read "Calvert of Allobar," Robert Simpson's latest serial beginning in this issue, don't cuss and lay it down because it looks as if there were going to be a lot of woman interest and "love stuff" in it.

Two white women and two black. One of the white ones, well, before the end you'll be as strong for her as for any man in the story, or I miss my guess. The other white one will furnish you amusement of a kind. No "love stuff" except in a very minor way.

As to the two black women, they need still less apology for being in an adventure tale.

THIS out of a personal letter from Hugh Pendexter. It is worth remembering. You will, I am sure, forgive the breach of Camp-Fire custom in leaving unchanged to dashes words in this historic utterance:

How sweet the words of Washington at Monmouth, when he rode up and found General Charles Lee trying to throw the fight:

"What's the meaning of all this? I desire to know the meaning of this disorder and this confusion!"

"By God, sir, American soldiers can not face British grenadiers!"

"By God, they can fight anything upon the face of the earth! And you are a damned poltroon!"

There spoke the Washington we love. Not a cold, classical bas-relief. But a man. And I choke up as I write this bit of dialog. So splendidly human, so wonderfully all-American, such a marvelous rough-houser in a fight. "They can fight anything on earth" has never to my knowledge been cut on soldiers' monuments. May we all so live we can always be justified in making that magnificent assertion.

EVEN at this date the following will be news to some of us. It came to us in a letter dated March 17, 1924, from a comrade in Australia, and also from another comrade in Suva, Fiji.

We may be a little late on news items, owing to the details of geography, the haphazard nature of our cache and the time necessary to turn a letter into print on a magazine page, but Camp-Fire's readers certainly are an efficient and world-wide staff of reporters for things of interest to Camp-Fire.

"Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

DEAR CAMP-FIRE: For this climate, tonight is chilly, so I venture to creep into shelter. My mission is brief. I enclose a cutting *re Cutty Sark*, which will interest old cobbers. I knew the old craft well and also the *Thermopylæ*, and their genial skippers. There is very great interest being taken in Australia at the prospect of seeing the old "saft shirt" again, after so many years absence.

Well, here's "how" to you and all the good sports who are within the charmed circle,

Yours fraternally,

WM. MCCREADIE,

Editor *Fiji Times and Herald*.

INTEREST in the famous clipper ship *Cutty Sark* has been revived in Sydney by the receipt of a letter by Mr. W. G. Deuchar intimating that the old clipper is coming to Australia.

According to the letter, the ship has been reconditioned and placed under the command of her former master, Captain Woodgate. When the last mail left London the ship had been handed over to act as flagship at Fowey Regatta.

The *Cutty Sark* is one of the few survivors of the early clippers and her name and fame are known world-wide. Recently she was acquired by a sailing ship enthusiast, Captain Dowman, of Falmouth and it is through his enterprise that the old ship is being recommissioned under the British flag. She had previously sailed under the Portuguese flag as the *Fereira*.

THE *Cutty Sark* was built for Mr. John Willis, of London, by Scott, of Dumbarton, in 1869. Mr. Willis's intention was to produce a rival to Messrs. George Thompson's famous clipper *Thermopylæ*, which had been built the previous year by Hood, of Aberdeen. The *Cutty Sark* was noted for her fast passages. One of her best in the Sydney trade was accomplished in 1881, when she ran from Sydney to The Lizard in 67 days. Captain Woodgate, who has resumed command, was in the *Cutty Sark* in the Sydney trade for many years, and he is sure to receive a rousing welcome on renewing his acquaintance with the port.

Banksia, N. S. W., Australia.

Having been a silent member of Camp-Fire for a fairly long time, I have now and again noticed pieces about the *Cutty Sark*, an old sailing vessel, so I herewith send you a clipping taken from the *Evening News*, Sydney, of October 8, 1923, which I just came across. I thought Camp-Fire readers might like to hear about it.—GEORGE E. COOPER.

SO THE *Cutty Sark* is to be refitted and sent to sea as a training ship! What thrills of joy go coursing through the veins of the shellbacks all the world over at this news, British and foreign alike, for the simple reason that she was the most noted flier of her day.

SHE is only a little ship, too. Men of the water front at Sydney to-day were the boys of the seventies when this packet used to come in with general cargo and passengers, 70 days or 80 days out from London. and under command of Captain Crombie—the proudest of all the windjammer skippers of his period.

Of composite build, 972 tons gross, the *Cutty Sark* was launched from Scott and Linton's yard, Dumbarton, in 1869. She is 212 feet long, 36 ft. beam, with a depth of 21 ft., and one of the prettiest little things that ever rode the seas. She looked different to the usual clipper. Cheeky and rakish—a long jib-boom and all the other attributes of a heeler. They used to say that "Old Man" Crombie never shortened sail from the time he left port until the tug took hold of him at the end of the voyage.

That, of course, was professional jealousy, although it is a fact that he would "carry on" till the last minute.

SHE has changed her colors once or twice since the halcyon days of "the fleets of the golden fleece," and has been known as the *Mario do Amparo* and the *Ferreira*, but she survived the rough treatment of the foreigners, and is once more under the good old flag which she proudly carried in the day of her youth. The cable says the hull is as good as ever it was—a not uncommon feature of the ships that were built in the days of yore.

The boys who are now to go to sea in her to learn the art of sailorising will have all the great traditions of the old mercantile marine to live up to, and when their time is up will be the proud possessors of "square-rigged" certificates. It is a good "ticket" to hold, for a man who serves his time in "sail" knows a good deal more about the sea than the other chap.—BOB BACKSTAY.

NO, COMRADE, it doesn't look like treason to me. Only a fool can fail to see the general campaign to deprive the American people of more and more personal liberty. Free speech, free assemblage, the right to have and bear arms, all are assailed. The politicians are definitely at work in a campaign to get us used to the idea that, this being a representative government, the thing to do is to put still more power in the hands of our representatives because we the people are not wise enough to govern ourselves. They are trying to teach us that our duty is merely to vote for the party candidate, even if we know him unfit, because in this way lies practical efficiency.

And who and what are behind the puppet politicians? Big business, of course; sometimes the Reds, when some course of the politicians happens to play direct into their hands; the unthinking, sheep-like citizens and the selfish, indifferent ones; those fanatic reformers who can see a fly on the barn-door but not the barn-door itself; all those who can fill their pockets by juggling the politicians; perhaps certain foreign powers who would like to see our citizenry without arms.

These and what others? In any case they are, taken together—and some of them singly, a tremendous force. They include *all* the interests that can make selfish gain by influencing or controlling affairs of government. Naturally they want all the power possible in the hands of as few representatives as possible. It is easier, cheaper and quicker to bribe, scare, fool, compel, cajole a few than many.

IT WOULD be particularly convenient for these interests if, after depriving the people of as much power as possible, they could turn them into a people without arms or skill in using arms. That would wipe out the last recourse of oppressed peoples. A comparatively small Army of paid troops could hold them down. Or a comparatively weak revolution of force could overturn everything.

No, comrade, if yours is treason, so is mine.

And speaking of the Army, just what is the nature of its personnel? We are a conceited people and naturally we consider our army very, very fine. It seems so, and certainly there are many splendid, loyal Americans in its rank and file. But how many of us *know* how many of the other kind are in it?

The Bolshevist method of gaining control includes as one of its first steps the little job of getting control of the Army. Not only by propaganda but by the surer method of worming Bolshevists or their sympathizers into the Army as parts of it. It doesn't need a majority of such to overpower the unsuspecting loyal troops by a blow struck without warning. History proves that.

RIDICULOUS? Yes? And just what actual facts have you with which to prove there are not a dangerous number of Reds enlisted in or serving in our Army, Navy and Marine Corps, Militia and Reserve? I don't mean what do you believe, but what do you *know?* The only estimate I've heard, though it came from an Army officer, placed the proportion of Reds in our Army so high that I refused to believe it. But he must have had something to go on. How much? I don't know. Do you?

Perhaps the loyal Americans in our Army could, if they could all add their knowledge together, give us pretty accurate data. But such Reds as there may be in our Army would naturally not advertise themselves except by more or less indirect propaganda and the more loyal a man was, the less likely would they be to give him any inkling of their plans.

In advance I request that no wild-eyed half-wit rise up with a loud bellow about my attacking the Army. I'm working for it, not against it, and I'll wager the bellower has no more respect for its admirable qualities and for the many admirable men it contains than have I.

As to my being an alarmist and an imaginative fool, well, I'd rather look around for a fire and not find it than be too stupid, self-satisfied and asleep to refuse to look around and get burned up in consequence. Also, if you label me alarmist, say it with facts, not opinions.

Now for comrade Germond's letter:

Pe Ell, Washington.

I have been thinking for some time that I would stand up at the Camp-Fire and say my piece, but what really set me off was the article in Camp-Fire by Mr. P. C. Cody of *Field and Stream* about the law McAdoo will try to put through Congress taking pistol and ammunition for the same. I sure do agree with Mr. Cody.

I WOULD call the attention of our law-makers to the part of the U. S. Constitution which says: "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be abridged." That means what it says, not merely rifles but pistols as well. But perhaps the men we send to Congress to enact laws for our welfare would like to express the same opinion as Senator —— did when trying a case before he became a Senator; he said "To —— with the Constitution."

This country still has, as citizens, some of the people whose ancestors fought and died for the rights embodied in that Constitution (I know mine did) and it is conceivable, even probable, they and others might fight for it again if crowded too far. Greater men than I have foreseen trouble of that nature.

What we want is less police protection of vice for a price and more stringent enforcement of the laws we have already, without fear or favor.

A POLICE official in one of our great cities told me: "The protection of criminals by police in return for information or money is a fact. I can't say more, but remember this. The law is not being enforced."

As for legislation we want more laws that are for the benefit of the common people and less graft, camouflage and blank-fool oppressive laws like the pistol law, for the benefit and protection of malefactors of great wealth and other crooks. And after all what does a mere hundred and fifty dollars mean to the hold-up man and hi-jacker, especially when many of the denizens of the underworld are expert mechanics and can make their own guns and ammunition?

I am not a red, pink or Bolshevik or even a socialist or I. W. W. and, as Patrick Henry said: "If this be treason, make the most of it."—O. B. GERMOND.

THE ruins of an ancient civilization in the State of Peten, Guatemala. Here is an old comrade who was once a neighbor of theirs, so to speak. What he says makes interesting hearing. Our thanks to him.

Kearney, New Jersey.

In 1900 while I was the administrator for the San Isidro Hacienda in the State of Campeche, Mexico, there came out of the woods to the south two Englishmen and an American with an Indian guide, who claimed to have crossed the big and unknown State of Peten, Guatemala, from the south.

PETEN is the largest State in Guatemala and joins the State of Campeche, Mexico, on the south. It is a country quite unknown and, except on its southern border, probably has never been trod by the foot of white man and, as they assured me, was entirely uninhabited by even Indians, as after they had left the southern border fifty miles behind they never saw the least indication of human occupation until within 30 miles of our hacienda. Their Indian guide had told them, as he spoke Spanish, of great ruins in the center of the State and his description had fired them with the desire to see if his reports were one-half true. He also told them he could take them through to Campeche and to the Laguna de Terminos. One of the English had seen the ruins of Palenque in the State of Chiapas, Mexico, and described them to the Indian. The Indian told them that these ruins were different, much larger, and that the great temple had a stone roof much larger. And, to make a long story short, as they all wanted to get to Mexico, they arranged with him to pilot them through under the understanding that "no ruins, only half the pay agreed upon."

AS THEY were pretty well tired, I had no difficulty in persuading them to stay a week and rest up. In fact, there was no alternative, as it would be a week before our launch would return and make its trip to El Carmen, the port on the other end of the lake, unless indeed they could catch a native dugout canoe going that way from the mouth of the Namentel River. They had literally cut their way through the thick jungle with machetes. For 15 miles back on our land the chapparal was thick

enough to make a bad enough job; they assured me that for 30 miles back it was easy going as compared to the State of Peten, as the whole country was a dense primitive forest of mahogany, Spanish cedar, dye-wood and all kinds of tropical growth including immense rubber trees.

They said the Indian's descriptions of the ruins were more than verified; that it was in the midst of a heavy forest and that they spent four days trying to get a clear idea of its extent. There were several pyramids with evidences of large stone pavements or plazas and paved streets, but the main big temple had, as the Indian had told them, a stone roof and one heavy downpour of rain proved it to be waterproof and without any leaks. Comparing it to the ruins of Palenque, which I had seen equally with the big Englishman, he assured me Palenque was not comparable either in extent or grandeur, as it was in a better state of preservation and much more massive. As I made no note of their names, I do not now remember more than that the big Englishman gave his name as Boggs.

THE fact of these ruins is not unknown to the Indians thereabouts, as being told about them in El Carmen. I made inquiry of some Indians who came regularly to our landing bringing chicle from the Hearst estate property up the Namentel River, and they told me that way back to the south in Peten there were great ruins, but none of them had ever seen them. But it was not until these white men confirmed the story, did I give full credit to it. As far as I have been able to ascertain, these were the first white men to see these ruins. The Englishman Boggs said he would report the matter to the British Embassy and the Mexican Government.

Whether he did or not, I am unable to say. Right on our hacienda there were large mounds out of which pottery, gold and silver ornaments and skulls have been dug. A druggist in El Carmen has quite a collection of these curiosities and among them one skull with two teeth filled with diamonds. In a collection in England I saw a skull quite similar with a diamond-filled tooth, but where it came from I do not now remember.

WHILE writing I might mention that the Island of El Carmen that separates the lake from the gulf is in great part a bed of asphalt covered with a layer of sand, in many places, as I have proved. not over two to three feet deep, but how deep the asphalt may be I am unable to say. In fact the greater part of the shallow Laguna del Carmen is one big asphalt lake underneath a flooding of salt water from 6 to 12 feet deep. In fact, I am of the opinion that there is an abundance of asphalt oil under the whole district. It is not at all improbable that the largest oil deposit in all of Mexico lies under the island of El Carmen and the shallow bed of the Laguna del Carmen, or Terminos. If I were younger and not 79 years of age I would *do something* to prove that the oil resources of Mexico have not yet been suspected, much less started to be developed.—GEORGE D. COLEMAN.

A GOOD many letters have come in in response to my questioning of the real value of our present ultra "practical" civilization in which greed for material possessions seems the chief impulse. Here is one of them:

Ampere, New Jersey.

What can our successors think of our mad extermination of beasts and birds and fish; our reckless destruction of forests; our eager inventing of ways and means to help exhaust the coal, the petroleum, and the metals our country had?

What basic motive will our descendants discover to explain our mania for converting our natural resources into forms that feed the vanity of mankind; the destroyed bearers of fur or of feathers? Will they find that the motive has been mainly a determination to show more, or more costly, or more showy possessions than others had?

Haven't you started a line of inquiry that should be kept up, for the sake of humanity? The unthinking say: "Human nature never changes." I say it changes every day, slowly but surely, as man learns and applies his new knowledge. Can't we tell them truths new to them, and so work toward the greater good of the larger number until these truths are pounded into blades that will cut through our shell of selfish vanity, for the good of our soul and the benefit of our successors?—EDWARD PERRY.

SOMETIMES, in spite of the fact that in each issue of the magazine "Camp-Fire" is labeled a "free-for-all meeting-place" and in itself bears witness to this character, people ask why we publish unverified statements or opinions that are wrong—or at least opposite to those held by the complainer.

Well, if they want a "practical" reason, here's one. It would require a large separate staff, well equipped with stenographers, to handle even the office end of the work. No half dozen men in the world know enough themselves to verify statements on all the subjects that come up at Camp-Fire. We sometimes ask specialist help from readers, but obviously we couldn't make a continuous business of asking them to devote their time to such work. To pay adequately for such a quantity of expert advice would cost enough to run another magazine on. And think of the time and delay involved. No sense to verifying unless it is done thoroughly and very soundly; to verify that way is hopelessly impossible.

But there are better reasons than that for not attempting to verify every reader's statement before he's allowed to make it. Under our present system we get things pretty well verified before we're through discussing them. If a comrade talks, he knows that other comrades may differ from him and will be quick to catch any mistakes. All sides get heard in the end.

IT IS, I think, a better means of getting the real facts. A mistaken view may call forth a correct one that otherwise might never have been heard at all. Also, a mistaken view, proved to be mistaken, is of infinitely greater value in finding truth than a mistaken view allowed to continue in the world unchallenged and uncorrected.

It is better for a better reason. To "verify" all statements before allowing them to be heard at Camp-Fire means establishing our office and a corps of authorities as a bureau of censorship on facts. This country already suffers from too many bureaus and too much censorship. And there at once comes into being a stoppage of all real advancement in knowledge when any man or group of men is allowed to decide for all men just what is knowledge and what is not. Authorities on fact differ most amazingly among themselves. No man or group of men knows enough to decide finally and soundly on what is fact. If you doubt it, consider how through all mankind's history the accepted, authoritative facts of each generation have been largely swept away as unsound by succeeding generations.

And letting a small group of men decide what is fact is bad business—narrowing and warping for the men in that group and tending to keep the remainder of the people from thinking for themselves.

FURTHER, censorship on fact inevitably becomes censorship on opinion, and censorship on opinion is death—intellectual death, political death, social death, moral death. We Americans are already drunken with propaganda of a thousand kinds and harried hither and thither by those who, because an opinion happens to be theirs, become fanatics in insisting that everybody else give up his opinion and adopt theirs or, if he won't give it up, that he be not allowed to express it and that he be punished for having it. And meanwhile we are proud of our liberty and enlightenment of thought, and of the freedom of speech and assemblage we no longer possess!

Shall "Camp-Fire," too, let George tell it its facts, do its thinking for it and express its opinions? Not if I can prevent. I am confronted by the fact that as its editor I can not avoid a choosing among the letters that come in to it. As much as I can, I select by drawing at random from our cache. From what is drawn I try to choose what will be most interesting. There is no violence to free speech and opinion in that. Nor in discarding what seems outside our field or what, like arguments on religious creeds, is too likely to create bad blood among us.

I have a right to express my own opinions just as the rest of you have. Also, our magazine stands for certain avowed principles, in advance you accept that fact even if not the principles, and I am justified in expressing them at Camp-Fire, not only direct, but in choosing from your letters.

BUT any man doing this choosing is in danger of slipping sometimes, perhaps quite unconsciously, into hindering the other fellow from thinking for himself or in other ways obstructing free opinion and expression. It is bad enough to have even that much censorship and "verifying." I don't see how to avoid it, but certainly we don't want any staff of editors and authorities created for the express business of putting a stopper on other people.

As for me, the unavoidable fly in the ointment, I try to play the game as fair as I can, giving both sides of an argument a hearing and striving not to censor in subtler or less obvious ways. Doubtless I slip sometimes. When I do, call me for it. You too have an interest in keeping our Camp-Fire free, open and fair.

And we'll not adopt the system of "verifying" everything one of you says before it's allowed to be heard at Camp-Fire. We'll go right on listening to all kinds of opinions on all kinds of things, each of us doing his own choosing among them.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Theren. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Biegelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apartment 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, ownerships, signals, etc., of all American Merchant Marine and Government vessels over five gross tons in the U. S., Panama and the Philippines; information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. Islands Part 3 Cuba
WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Warner Sugar Co. of Cuba, Miranda, Oriente, Cuba. Geography, industries, people, customs, hunting, fishing, history and government.

7. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star,* Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

8. ★ South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).
CHARLES BROWN, JR., Boite No. 167, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

9. ★ Australia and Tasmania
PHILLIP NORMAN, 842 Military Rd., Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

11. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

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12. Philippine Islands.
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

13. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 1402 Lytton Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

14. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

15. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan
GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

17. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters
CAPTAIN C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure*. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

18. ★ Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan
GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., 60 Rue de l'Amirauté, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

19. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria
ROBERT SIMPSON, care *Adventure*. Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

20. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, La Roseraie, Cap d'Ail (Alpes Maritimes), France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

21. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

22. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ont., Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

23. Africa Part 5 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

24. Africa Part 6 Tripoli
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

25. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

26. ✠ Africa Part 8 Sudan
W. T. MOFFAT, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

27. Turkey
I. F. EDWARDS, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

28. Asia Minor
(Editor to be appointed.)

29. Bulgaria, Roumania
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

30. Albania
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Jugo-Slavia and Greece
LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Plattsburg Barracks, New York. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

32. Scandinavia
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

33. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

34. ✠ Great Britain
THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

35. France
NORMAN S. GOODSILL, 2232 First Street, San Diego, Calif. Customs, living conditions in Paris and provinces; motoring, business conditions; general information.

36. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

37. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil
PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 360 W. 122nd St., New York, N. Y. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

38. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

39. Central America
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

40. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

41. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, care of Roadmaster, S. P. Co., San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

42. Mexico Part 3 Southeastern
W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 1303 Euclid St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Federal Territory of Quinta Roo, Yucatan, Campeche. Travel, geography, business conditions, exploration, inhabitants, history and customs.

43. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment: Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

44. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

45. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
A. D. L. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

46. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

47. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
(Editor to be appointed.) Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel· customs regulations.

48. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

49. ✠ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec
JAS. F. B. BELLFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Send International Reply Coupon or three cents.*)

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

50. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6720 Leland Way, Hollywood, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

51. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

52. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish: camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

53. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico
H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance, oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

54. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.
FRANK MIDDLETON, 509 Frémont St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

55. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.
FRED W. EGLESTON, Editor, Bozeman *Courier*, Bozeman, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

56. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
R. T. Newman, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

57. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

58. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

59. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

60. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

61. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See section 62.*)

62. Middle Western U. S. Part 5 Great Lakes
H. C. GARDNER, 1909 Stout St., Denver, Colo. Seamanship, navigation, courses and distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties; river navigation.

63. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Box 843, Inglewood, Calif. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

64. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
HOWARD A. SHANNON, care *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

65. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
HOWARD A. SHANNON, care *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

66. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

67. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala. Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Box 1419 S. W. 5th St., Miami, Fla.

Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

68. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

69. Eastern U. S. Part 7 Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., and Mass.
HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 35 Dawson Ave., West Haven, Conn. Fishing, hunting, travel, roads; business conditions; history.

70. Eastern U. S. Part 8 New Jersey
FRANCIS H. BENT, Farmingdale, N. J. Topography, hunting, fishing; automobile routes; history; general information.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St. N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*. *United States:* Military history, Military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section.

General: Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

J.—American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, 1244½ Leighton Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

K.—First Aid on the Trail

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazards of the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

L.—Health-Building Outdoors

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

M.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. General-office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

N.—Herpetology

DR. G. K. NOBLE, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St., and Central Park West, New York, N. Y. General information concerning reptiles and amphibians; their customs, habits and distribution.

O.—Entomology

DR. FRANK E. LUTZ, Ramsey, N. J. General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.

N.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write J. COX, care *Aventure*.

For general information on **U. S. and its possessions** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash, D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries,** the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti,** the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska,** the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii,** Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba,** Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.,** Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **Canal Zone,** the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

For whereabouts of **Navy men,** Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. D.

Montreal to Mexico by Inland Waters

A GOOD time to'start is in the fall before the freeze, and down the Mississippi in the winter; gets pretty hot in some of the lower reaches in summer:

Request:—"Am thinking of taking a motor-boat trip from Montreal to Mexico and would greatly appreciate any information you can give as to routes, climate, etc.

Is it possible to go from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River?

What size boat would I be able to take through this waterway?

Can supplies be obtained *en route?* Or would it be necessary to carry enough to last say two weeks?

Where can I obtain charts and other information regarding this waterway?

If there is another route you know of, I would be pleased to hear of it."—S. MILLER, Montreal, P. Q., Canada.

Reply, by Mr. Spears:—You can go from Montreal through Great Lakes, down Lake Michigan, through Chicago Canal, into Illinois River and down Mississippi, Atchafalaya, through canals and inland bays to Galveston, Texas, and on down Gulf coast in and outside to Mexico—a wonderful trip. Probably boat of two or three foot draft, if you wanted as deep a craft. You would need a seaworthy launch, semicruiser or cruiser, but could do it in a big skiff with outboard motor. You could obtain supplies all along the way—would need a week's supplies, though, in case of storm. I was held seven days on an island in the Great Lakes one time.

Great Lakes Survey, Detroit, Mich.; Miss. River Commission, St. Louis, Mo.; and Hydrographic Survey, Washington, D. C., for maps and charts.

This would be your shortest route; but you could go down St. Lawrence and down Atlantic Coast, across Florida to Gulf of Mexico and thence to Mexico—much longer. I'd say the Mississippi River route—and an interesting route it is, too.

The full statement of the sections as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

The Terrible Turk

"THE kindest, friendliest soul imaginable":

Request:—"Would like to get some information on living conditions and the possibility of obtaining employment with the Standard Oil Co. in Turkey.

At present my friend and I are in the U. S. Navy. We expect to be discharged next spring. We are in the best of health; willing to go anywhere. Have been in several foreign countries, so we do not feel lost when away from home. My "buddie" has worked in the oil fields here, in the States, but for myself, I am inexperienced.

Isn't there an office in New York where they ship men over there for Standard Oil?

Would be thankful if you would give us all the information on this subject that you think would help us."—CHESTER O. HAUGHTON, San Francisco, Cal.

Reply, by Mr. Edwards:—In reply to your inquiry about employment with the Standard Oil in Turkey, I would advise you to write to the Standard Oil Company, Personnel and Training, 81 New

Street, New York. Also, it might be advisable to write to the Standard Oil Co. of New York, at 26 Broadway, New York. That is the big office of the company that at present markets petroleum products in Turkey. I have an idea that they use mostly specially trained Americans, in official positions; and depend upon native help, who do not demand as high wages as Americans, for the rest. But it is certainly worth while to try.

Constantinople is the most fascinating city in the world, to me. Have you been there? Every kind of people in the world drifts across Galata Bridge, in the course of an hour. It was a very overcrowded city when I lived there, 1921-22. But now the Russian refugees have gone; the Greeks had to get out after the fall of Smyrna to the Turks; and living conditions are better. There should also be a much better chance of employment; the poor Russians crowded every possible opening for work.

The Standard Oil headquarters there is several miles out of the city proper—up the Bosphorus, near the entrance of the Black Sea. The men I knew lived in town and went up there every day. But there are certainly places to live near there. In the city itself, before deciding on any place to live, it would be best to inquire at the Y. M. C. A., the Sailors' Club, or the American Consulate. You will find very pleasant people at all these places. Our consul, Mr. G. Bie Ravndal, is a very fine man. His daughter, Miss Sarah Ravndal, is much interested in the Sailors' Club. There is a real American cafeteria there, open to the public; and dancing, theatricals, and so on, in a big hall.

Outside of Constantinople, the Standard Oil headquarters in Turkey are mostly in pretty lonely places. But two of you wouldn't mind.

Don't believe the tales you hear about the "Terrible Turk." The Turkish farmer is the kindest, friendliest soul imaginable. And they are honest. My brother has been supply officer for our Navy in Constantinople for three years, and says he'd trust a Turk before other Levantines, any time!

Americans have treated Turks well, so are treated well in return.

Hope you will find what you want. Best of luck.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Ocean Records

HOW'S this for speed?

Request:—"Recently I heard a New York Harbor Pilot say he saw the log of the *Northern Pacific,* and that during the late war she sailed from Hoboken, Pier 4, the old North German Lloyd Pier, reached Brest, France, and returned to said pier in Hoboken in just eleven days. Is this possible? Is that a world record, if true?"—SIDNEY J. KELLY, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Reply, by Mr. Rieseberg:—The S. S. *Great Northern* and *Northern Pacific* were the fastest transports used during the war.

They hold a record of making the fastest trip between this country and Europe, making a complete turn-about, taking on new troops and starting back again within nineteen days time.

Flintlocks

IT'S not generally known, I suppose, that they were made, up to 1845—long after the type of firearm which we use today was invented:

Request:—"I have looked in every bookstore in Chicago for some book on the history of firearms, but could not find anything of the kind. I have Bannerman's catalog, but would like to get a more detailed description of the wheel-lock and snaphaunce.

Could you tell me if there is such a book (or books) published? If so where can I obtain them? Also if you could give me a description of these two locks it would help along a lot."—E. R. CHRESTENSON, Aurora, Ill.

Reply, by Mr. Barker:—If you can obtain them, the following works are excellent:

"An Illustrated History of Arms and Armor from the Earliest Period to the Present Time" by Auguste Demmin. With nearly 2,000 illustrations. London: George Bell & Sons, York St., Covent Garden, 1877.

"The Gun and Its Development with Notes on Shooting" by W. W. Greener, Cassell & Company, Ltd. London, Paris, New York & Melbourne, 1885. (Third edition).

Of modern books there is Major Pollard's "Book of the Pistol," published in London recently. The best works, however, of recent date are those by Prof. Charles Winthrop Sawyer, of 41 Humphreys St., Dorchester, Mass. The first one is the one you particularly want. The second is out of print. They are as follows, and may be obtained by writing the author direct, mentioning my name. I think they are about three dollars and something in cost.

"Firearms in American History," Vol. I "Firearms in American History," Volume II. "The Revolver." "United States Single Shot Martial Pistols," (paper cover). "Our Rifles."

The names give you an idea of the contents of each. The first one deals with the older weapons. You really need all the works there are—and those are mighty few—to get much of anything, and then there are mistakes. If I ever have the time I am in hopes to get out a new work on early firearms, which will probably, in its turn, have its quota of errors.

ONE very serious error is made both by Demmin and by one of the foremost American authors in confounding the true snaphaunce with the Miguelet or Miquilet lock. Explanation will be found below.

The first pistol and gun were simply metal tubes, loaded at the muzzle, with a hole on top, on which powder was strewn, and, if it had not blown away in the mean time, was ignited by a coal or any form of fire handy. This was modified by placing a pan or sort of saucer on the side of the barrel, with the touch hole on the side by the pan. The barrel thus acted as a windbreak.

This was modified by adding a serpentine, or jaws in which was held a slow match—being a piece of rope so treated as to continue, after lighting, to bear a live coal at the end, like the children's punk on July 4th. At first there was no mechanism, the tail of the serpentine passing through the stock and

being worked up and down to the pan like a lever. Gradually a lock plate with a spring inside or out was added, with which to operate the serpentine by means of a trigger. Concussion had nothing to do with it. It was simply to bring the end of the match to the pan of powder. These several forms were the matchlock.

They still required outside fire, however, to light the match. So in 1515, at Nuremberg, appeared the wheel-lock. The lock plate is quite large. The cock or hammer faced backward and held in its jaws a piece of flint—sulfurous pyrites were tried but were discontinued.

There is a pan on the side, through which is a slot. Through this slot runs the top of the wheel, which is placed on an axis on the side of the plate and turns longitudinally with the pistol. This wheel—about an inch and a quarter in diameter and about three-sixteenths of an inch thick, differing in different-sized pieces—is channeled so as to make four sharp ridges, and these are cut across at intervals. The wheel is sometimes on the outside of the plate, sometimes inside and sometimes with an outside cover. There is a cover to the pan which slides forward to uncover the pan.

When the cock is brought back by hand, the wheel—which has in the mean time been wound up like a clock with a key on the axis or nipple, thus automatically springing the pan-cover forward—rests on the rough surface of the flint. That is to say, the rough, grooved circumference of the wheel rests against the flint, which is now facing down upon the wheel, held in the jaws of the cock. One end of the axis on which the wheel turns passes outward through the lock plate, and being square in section, receives the spanner which winds the lock. The other end of the axis is inside the plate.

Between this bearing and the wheel there is an offset to which is swiveled one end of a three or four link chain. The other end of the chain is swiveled to the end of a spring of enormous power. On the face of the wheel, which is flush with the inner face of the lock plate, there is a hole—and if the wheel is outside the plate, there is a corresponding hole through the plate—serving as a notch; and as the wheel is wound a lever bearing a knob stands ready to slip into this hole or notch and hold the lock at cock. The scear prevents this from being thrown out.

When the trigger is pulled the mechanism operates by the trigger action on this scear, the knob is thrown out of the hole, and the wheel spins rapidly nearly a full revolution—about three quarters—grating against the flint with its rough edge and producing the spark which ignites the powder in the pan, which in turn passes through the touch hole into the barrel and fires the piece.

As may be seen, this was an expensive and complicated form of lock and although made and used down to 1800 was little used save for sporting purposes. The simpler matchlock was used long after the wheel appeared.

Now at about 1585 it occurred to some one that it would be simpler to have the flint—held in the cock—sharply strike a stationary piece of metal, instead of the metal revolving against a stationary flint. Hence a lock, very similar to the later flintlock, with which, no doubt, you are fully familiar, appeared.

The first thought was to turn the cock around, facing to the front, arrange the spring to move it and construct a battery of steel for the flint to strike. They very naturally kept the sliding pan-cover, as in the wheel-lock, and put on a battery—properly termed a frizzen—separate therefrom, operating on an arm on the side of the lock plate. The sliding pan-cover automatically slid forward, uncovering the pan, when the trigger was pulled and the cock fell. The distinguishing features of the snaphaunce are the sliding pan-cover and the separate frizzen.

The Miguelet or Miquilet lock is a flintlock with the main spring on the outside of the lock plate, and is not a matter of date so much as locality. The Spanish gunsmiths made Miguelet locks with outside mainsprings in percussion pistols and guns as late as 1845. The Oriental countries always followed this type. Yet at least two excellent writers today term a Miguelet a snaphaunce.

AS A matter of fact, snaphaunces were made with both the inside and outside mainspring. (Usually inside, however.) As the more modified flintlock—in which the frizzen was turned up and made to do duty as pan-cover also, thus doing away with the mechanism inside the lock-plate that slid the cover forward—came in in about 1640, you may readily see that the snaphaunce proper occupied but a brief and transitory period and is therefore by far the scarcest form of gunlock to be found today.

Common sense should show that the snaphaunce proper must have preceded the Miguelet, as it is obvious that once having turned up the frizzen and made a pan-cover of it, they would never go back to the sliding cover, which was at first retained from the foregoing wheel-lock.

In short, it is apparent that the first change from the wheel to the falling hammer and battery was a pistol with a sliding pan-cover, whether with inside or outside mainspring. And since we are told that this first piece with a falling hammer was termed a snaphaunce we are left no choice but to term any flintlock pistol—not wheel—with a falling hammer and *sliding pan-cover* a snaphaunce. When the turned-up frizzen came we must term all with outside mainspring a Miguelet, and within side main spring, a flintlock. This naturally causes confusion to all but collectors, as wheel, snaphaunce, Miguelet and flintlock proper are all really flintlocks.

There are two explanations for the derivation of the name, but they are rather long to give here, and moreover you did not ask about it.

I trust that you may obtain the books you desire.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

The Eastern Shore of Maryland

A LIVING alike from land and sea:

Request:—While I was looking at an issue of *Adventure* I saw an article written by you concerning hunting and trapping in Maryland on Barren Island.

I would like to know more about this island, such as: Population? Area in square miles? Much woods? Big game to hunt? How much money needed? Is it best to trap with a motor boat? How far is it from the mainland of Maryland? How much is a non-resident license?

When does season open? Temperature? Is a boat navigable all winter? What kind of equipment for three fellows?"— ——.

Reply, by Mr. Shannon:—The last time I was in the vicinity of Barren Island no one was living there. There were several houses, all empty, at that time.

The island contains probably fifteen square miles, timbered with pine mostly. No big game on the island. Muskrat, 'coon, fox in the marsh country near by. Ducks in plenty during the fall and winter months. About six miles from Meekins' Neck on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, directly across the bay from Solomon's Island.

As the only means of communication with the island is by boat, I imagine a sturdy motor boat would be absolutely indispensible. They make a dandy boat built for rough-water going at Hooper's Island; and one of these made to order costs $350 to $500, depending on the size and power of the motor installation.

There are no State game laws in Maryland as every county makes its own. Write the postmaster at Golden Hill, Md., for local laws.

The winters are sometimes severe, and the bay gets rough in the vicinity of Barren Island. In fact that is the real reason for its being deserted. Too hard to keep in communication with the mainland during the winter months.

There are many places along the Eastern Shore where three husky, able-bodied youngsters could make a good living. I'd advise buying an abandoned farm—they may be purchased cheaply enough—and building it up. Grow truck, chickens, etc.

Get a job with some local fishing crew and learn the game from the inside—knock around until you are familiar with crabbing, oystering, trapping possibilities.

Keep the truck patch working—it will prove the real gold mine in the end. *Work*, you bet! Lots of it—but you will be able to eat three square meals every day, earn considerably more than a New York City clerk and save something too.

I know one party who started in the oyster business on a shoestring, buying locally and shipping to Baltimore. He now owns the larger part of an island, has his own fish and oyster packing plant and tomato-canning equipment in addition to a modern home.

It can be done. Depends altogether on the chap and his willingness to work. You will find the Maryland folks willing to go all the way to help the man who tries to help himself—and I guess that applies to almost any section outside the big cities.

Plant a few iron dollars in your kick, buy a ticket to Cambridge, Md., talk to the old timers, look over the country and pick the place *you* like. There is plenty of opportunities. It's up to you.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Tanning a Deer Hide

A QUICK way to preserve the skin:

Request:—"Can you give me a simple process for tanning and dressing hides, such as deer and coyote?

Would you recommend a U. S. Army Krag rifle for deer hunting? Are they reliable?

Will certainly appreciate any information you can give me, and thank you in advance for your trouble."—L. H. Thomas, Jr., Lameso, Tex.

Reply, by Mr. Whiteaker:—If the skin is not fresh, soak it thoroughly in soft water (never use hard water in tanning), then beam or scrape off all meat or loose fiber. Next put the skin in a lukewarm bath made of water with enough oil of vitriol to make it as sharp as vinegar (the amount of vitriol to be used can be determined by adding a little gradually, and tasting the liquor after stirring it thoroughly), and add a handful of salt. Leave the skin in this bath twenty-four hours, when the native grease should be removed and the glue in the skin loosened from the fiber, so as to give the tanning materials an opportunity to take effect on the glue and fiber.

Next wash the skin (wool or fur) in strong soap suds, removing all dirt and grease from the wool or fur, then rinse in clear water. Next dissolve in hot water, two ounces of alum, one ounce glauber salts, one ounce borax, a piece of saltpeter the size of the end joint of your thumb, and add a little salt. Add this mixture to sufficient water (that is a little below blood heat) to cover the skin. Leave the skin in this for twenty-four hours, stirring it up occasionally so that the liquor will reach all parts of the skin. When the skin is taken from this tanning liquor, strip out all that can be done with the hands, and hang up in the shade to dry—the sun will make it hard.

When bone-dry, sprinkle the flesh side with water, fold up until the leather is evenly damp—not wet—then stretch, to length then to width. Repeat the pulling process until the skin is dry, when it may be finished off with sandpaper. If the skin is handled according to directions the leather will be as soft and pliable as velvet.

Success in working leather depends more on the manner of handling than on the materials used. To tan a hide without first removing all the native grease and oil means that the leather will soon become rotten.

There are several methods used in tanning hides but the above is about the cheapest and best method that I know. Indians used to rub the skins that they wanted to tan with the brains of a bear and tallow from other animals, roll in limestone, scrape all the flesh off and then bury for several days. Take up and go through other processes until they had the skin soft and pliant, then soak in tanning bark, oak bark, or other strong juices from trees. They always had nice soft leather for clothing and moccasins; but there is too much labor about their method as it would take three or four weeks to get the same results that are now attained within a week or so.

A U. S. Krag rifle is rather heavy to carry through brush all day. A lighter rifle would be much better. The Krags are not always reliable after a fellow has carried them for several hours.

A 30.30 is the kind that is more often used for deer hunting.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

Port Sudan

THE subjoined monograph has been printed in leaflet form on hard paper. The leaflet may be obtained free from the "Ask Adventure" expert responsible for it: namely W. T. Moffatt, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England. Don't expect any response unless you enclose addressed envelop and return postage.

PORT SUDAN, the commercial and shipping port of the Sudan, is situated on the Red Sea coast. This is the only outlet to the sea from the interior of the Sudan.

Imports: Sugar, cotton goods, flour, timber, iron and steel machinery, coffee, tea, clothing, etc.

Exports: Gum, cotton, sesame, senna, durra, ivory, etc.

The harbor has a good entrance, two cables' length wide, protected from all winds, and anchorage good. Depth 10 to 14 fathoms; at the permanent quays 30 feet. Vessels can enter or leave the port at any time of the day or night. Prevailing winds northeast.

At the permanent quays there are five berths, each 125 meters long, lighted by electricty and equipped with four 2-ton and one 7-ton gantry cranes. Railways run alongside quays. Four electric coal-transporters and one electric coal-rehandling bridge plant at the coal berth at the end of the quays. A 12-ton steam floating crane available for heavy lifts.

Farther up the harbor are the dockyard workshops equipped for ship-repairing. A steam-hauling slipway capable of taking vessels up to 500 tons in the dockyard.

There is also a first-class hotel capable of accommodating about thirty visitors. Charges from five to six American dollars per day at the present rate of exchange.

There is a thoroughly well-equipped modern hospital with a British surgeon in charge, with accommodations for three first-class and fourteen second-class patients, also third class, the latter being suitable for natives of the country.

Sport is represented by the presence of two British clubs equipped with tennis and squash racket courts. There is also a nine-hole golf-course. Horse-racing three or four times a year. Special bathing-pools, protected from any danger of sharks. —W. T. MOFFAT.

Trapping in Colorado and Wyoming

WHERE it no longer pays:

Request:—"Please send me information on hunting and trapping in Colorado and Wyoming.

Can a living be made in either State by trapping?" —KENNETH BLANKENBAKER, Morocco, Ind.

Reply, by Mr. Middleton:—Sorry, but I can not advise any one to try to make a living by trapping in either Colorado or Wyoming; you see, in each of the States, agriculture is coming to the front and the States are becoming more settled each year so that the fur-bearers are being driven to the most inaccessible places; there are a few old-timers who still trap for a living through the winter. They establish their trap-line, get provisions, bedding, and supplies of all kinds, enough to last them for the winter, in to their winter camp not later than November; soon after that, they are snowed in for the winter; usually a matter of from four to five months. It's a lonesome life and a hard one and often they do not more than barely make expenses.

Then again, there are occasional young fellows who work on a ranch at feeding stock through the winter, who do pretty well trapping coyote as a sort of a side line.

No, I should say that there is not a living to be made in either of these States at trapping; Northwestern Wyoming and Northwestern Colorado should offer the best opportunities, but my advice is, don't try it.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

BEYERSDORFER, ALBERT G. (Joe Bush). Explorer, prospector. Last heard from at California, Rep. de Colombia in 1922. Letters to you returned unclaimed. If in state, wire.—Address CARLTON, Pomona, Calif.

CHARLES H. Let us know where you are. We can arrange for another start. Suggest you come here. Will send help.—Address LILLIAN H., Nurses' Home, Clara Barton Hospital, Los Angeles, Calif.

CUMMINS, NORMAN. About twenty years old, formerly of Springfield, Ohio. Last heard from in Los Angeles, Calif. Any information will be appreciated.—Address C. W. DAVIDSON, care of *Adventure*.

HOLLIDAY, ROBERT EMMETT. Born Nov. 19, 1881, in Savannah, Ga. We were separated when small children. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address WILLIAM THOMAS HOLLIDAY, Toyo Fisheries Co., Wilmington, Calif.

DREYER, HERBERT. Last heard of on a northern Wyoming cattle ranch. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address LEONARD DREYER, 1134 E. 13th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

SHUMBARGER, EDWARD H. Formerly lived near Raymond, Nebraska, and in 1910 went to Houston, Texas, with the intention of going into Mexico by way of Galveston. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address MRS. JAMES G. BOBB, 237 Areba Ave., Hershey, Pa.

DARLING JACK, please let me know where you are. Jerry and I are suffering.—Address MRS. JERRY PALMER, 1708 Sawyer, Houston, Texas.

BROWN, GEORGE. Brown hair, blue eyes, height about five feet nine inches. Last heard of in Denver, Colorado in August, 1924. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address MRS. O. H. PRICE, Route 1, Box 5, Mulkeytown, Ill.

THE following have been inquired for in either the February 28, or March 20, 1925 issues of ADVENTURE. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine:

BAKER, CAPT. JAMES J.; Barbour, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence; Bateman, Leonard; Clute, Henry C.; Connolly, Jack (John Joseph); Dean, Will; Devine, Willard; Duffield, Harry A.; Erdtmann, Gustav; Frake, William; Gilligan, Sidney Roger; Hart, James; Hopkins, Louis; King, Joseph Stanley; Kilgore, Millard F.; McKay, John; O'Shea, Wm.; Pariera, G. W. Mrs. (neé Jessie Isabel Kelly); Petterson, John; Roycroft, Lloyd C.; Ruff, Harold; Walters, Harry A; Younglove, Emily

MISCELLANEOUS—Annie; Any information as to P. J. Lynch, Robert Auburn and F. J. Temple who were in Mexico and C. A.; Kyd Gyp and Shanghai; Ralph, write to your old pard; would like to hear from those who knew me while serving in Camp Supply Detachment, Q.M.C., Camp Merritt, N. J.; would like to hear from any one that was overseas with me in Co. I, 11th regiment, U. S. Marines.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

APRIL 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

PORT OF SOMEWHERES ELSE — *L. Paul*
Ship jumpers turn heroes on the Great Lakes.

THE CONFIRMATION OF PETER — *S. B. H. Hurst*
In Alaska the fist is mightier than the word.

THE POOL OF EXECUTION — *William Westrup*
South African mounted police and a murder mystery.

THE REVENGE OF JINGLING CLOUD — *Alanson Skinner*
Braves honor the old "long-knife."

CALVERT OF ALLOBAR — **A Four-Part Story** — **Part II**
MacConnachie called him a swine. — *Robert Simpson*

DRIVEN — *Royce Brier*
He was the fool of the mining camp.

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long* stories by Thomson Burtis, Arthur O. Friel, George E. Holt, G. W. Barrington, Leslie McFarlane, Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, Hobart C. Montee, Farnham Bishop and Arthur D. Howden Smith; and short stories by Captain Dingle, Leo Walmsley, Ralph R. Perry, Fairfax Downey, Henry S. Whitehead, Larry Barretto, Percy Charles Chandler, Captain Mansfield, Lewis H. Kilpatrick, John Webb, Wm. Byron Mowery and others; stories of desert riders in Morocco, deputy sheriffs in Texas, aviators in the oilfields, hardcase skippers on the high seas, robber barons on the Rhine, fur traders in the north country, doughboys on the Western Front, viking farers in Norwegian fiords, pirates in Madagascar, adventurers the world around.

The Tale in the Bottle . . .

MUTINY! *A Fight to Death with Knives!*

The captain was to blame. He had bullied and beaten the Indian coolies until they mutinied—250 of them against 21 white men. When it seemed a matter of minutes before the coolies would make their final rush they unexpectedly offered a compromise—they would spare the lives of the white men if the captain would fight their leader, a fight to death with knives! The captain accepts the challenge. What will be the outcome of the fight? Will the coolies play fair and live up to their promise? Every man will enjoy this dramatic story of the sea, "The Story in the Bottle," by Roderick Siler in

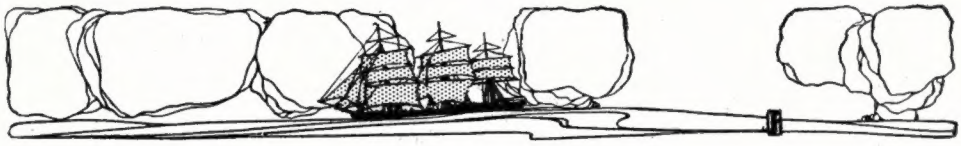
Stories by

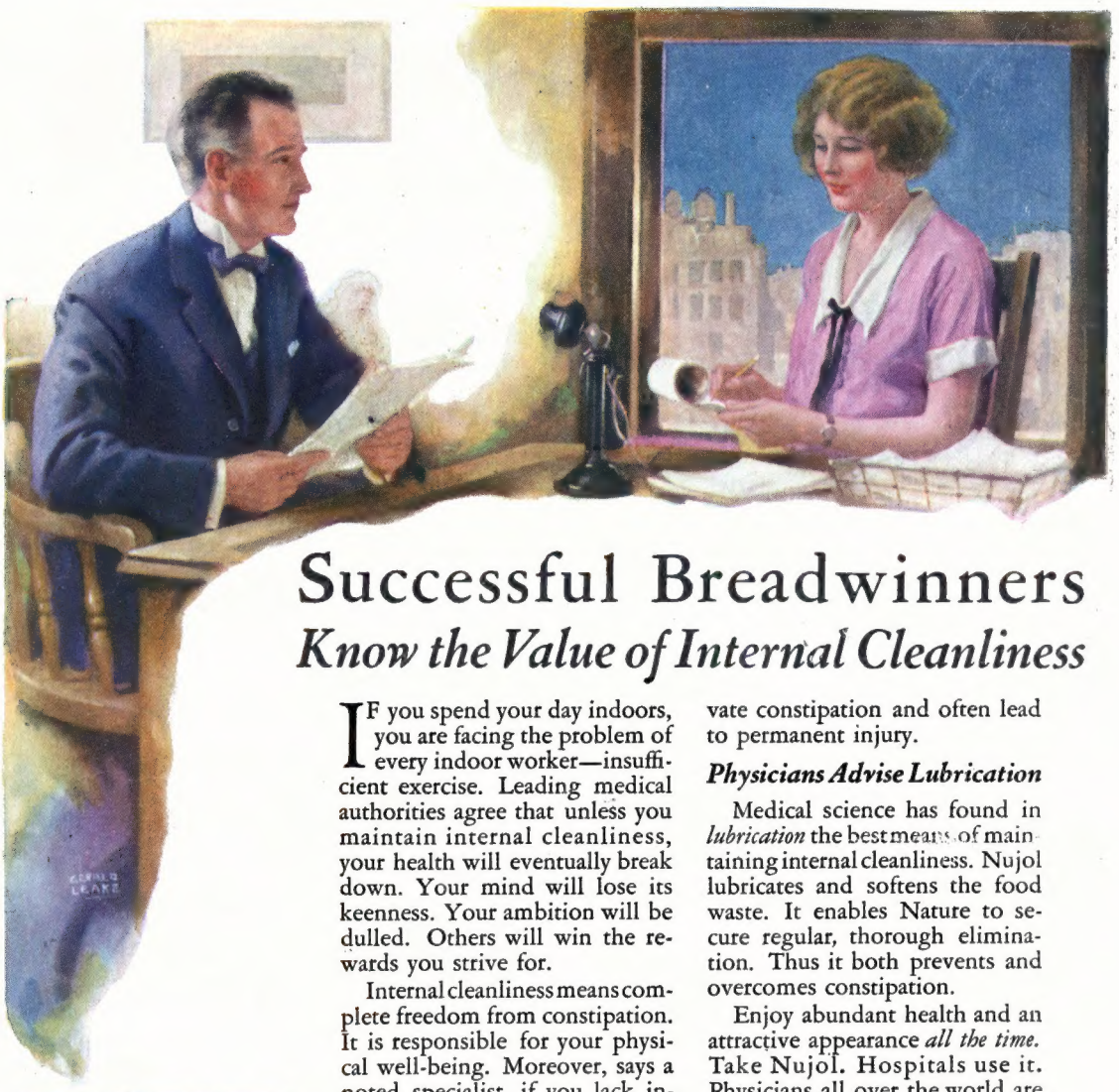
ERNEST POOLE
E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM
GAYNE DEXTER
HOWARD VINCENT O'BRIEN

Also in Everybody's Magazine for April

April
Everybody's Magazine

FIRST IN FICTION ON EVERY NEWSSTAND—25c A COPY





Successful Breadwinners

Know the Value of Internal Cleanliness

IF you spend your day indoors, you are facing the problem of every indoor worker—insufficient exercise. Leading medical authorities agree that unless you maintain internal cleanliness, your health will eventually break down. Your mind will lose its keenness. Your ambition will be dulled. Others will win the rewards you strive for.

Internal cleanliness means complete freedom from constipation. It is responsible for your physical well-being. Moreover, says a noted specialist, if you lack internal cleanliness you are working under a severe handicap. Internal cleanliness is the secret of a clear eye and an active brain. With it work becomes a pleasure; without it, a drudgery.

Your doctor will tell you laxatives and cathartics only aggravate constipation and often lead to permanent injury.

Physicians Advise Lubrication

Medical science has found in *lubrication* the best means of maintaining internal cleanliness. Nujol lubricates and softens the food waste. It enables Nature to secure regular, thorough elimination. Thus it both prevents and overcomes constipation.

Enjoy abundant health and an attractive appearance *all the time.* Take Nujol. Hospitals use it. Physicians all over the world are recommending it.

Take Nujol as regularly as you wash your face or brush your teeth. Nujol is not a medicine. Like pure water it is harmless. Nujol makes internal cleanliness a habit—the healthiest habit in the world. For sale by all druggists.

Nujol

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For Internal Cleanliness